The Incurable Dr.Vaid: Transgression, Nation and the Crisis in Postcolonial Hindi Criticism

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I declare this thesis to be my own work except where acknowledgment has been given to the works of others.

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Abstract

Krishna Baldev Vaid is one of the most innovative and significant writers of Hindi fiction. He has relentlessly tested the boundaries of acceptability in Hindi fiction, and has refused to bow to pressure to conform to dominant paradigms regarding what Hindi literature should look like. The purpose of this thesis is to show that accusations that Vaid's fiction is obscene, un-Indian and lacking social engagement reflect certain anxieties regarding what constituted 'authentic' Indian literature in the postcolonial context. I argue that criticism of Vaid's more controversial work, and the subsequent relegation of his fiction to the periphery, has been the result of a set of postcolonial circumstances whereby establishing a modernity which could be asserted as both modern and Indian was considered important. In the case of Hindi literature ideas regarding what constituted 'good' Hindi fiction were heavily influenced by the social and political milieu of post-colonial India and the establishment of this uniquely Indian style of modernity.

The thesis takes the themes of sexual transgression and nation as the basis for analysis of selected short fiction by Vaid to demonstrate how Vaid critiques the postcolonial discourse of the time. I argue that Vaid's fiction has been marginalized as a result of a postcolonial crisis in Hindi criticism, despite, or perhaps because of, his relentless challenging of normative discourse and his absolute refusal to conform to the boundaries dictated by his contemporaries. In the texts analysed Vaid uses rupture, dissonance, irony and wit to destabilize the predominating discourse regarding sexual transgression and nationalist sentiment. After analysis of selected fiction of Vaid based on the themes of sexual transgression and nation, the thesis proceeds to an outline of the crisis in postcolonial Hindi criticism, criticism of Vaid's work, and rebuttal from Vaid regarding the criticism he has received and the environment he considers it reflects.

The main contribution of the thesis is to show that criticism of Vaid's fiction has been heavily influenced by postcolonial anxieties regarding Indianness and authenticity and that this reflects more about the environment in which he wrote than the literature itself. The evidence shows that rather than demonstrating a lack of social engagement, obscenity or undue imitation of Western models, Vaid is

deeply engaged with the Indian postcolonial environment and challenges the very basis on which it was constructed.

Contents

Notes on translation and transliteration

All translations from Hindi sources are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

The system used for transliteration of Hindi is the method used by R.S. McGregor in *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* (1993). I have adhered to correct transcription of Hindi and Sanskrit words in my own work, but have not attempted to standardize transcriptions from other sources. Words which are part of standard English usage such Punjabi, Hindi and nirvana, have not been transliterated.

Introduction

In 2010 Dr Krishna Baldev Vaid was nominated by the Hindi Academy, chaired by Delhi's Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, to receive the Shalaka Samman for 2008/09, the academy's most prestigious literary award. In a bizarre turn of events, the academy revoked the decision, based on protests that Vaid's literature 'contained obscene and graphic material '. (Thaindian News, 17 March 2010) The charges against Vaid were primarily based on the content of his novels *Bimal urf Jāeṁ to Jāeṁ Kahāṁ/Bimal, alias, If-We-Were-to-Go, Where-Would-We-Go?* (first published in 1974) and *Nasrīn* (first published in 1975). The revocation of the award precipitated protests among the Delhi literary fraternity, and other award recipients refused to attend based on the denial of the award to Vaid. Letters were written, articles appeared in major newspapers, and Sheila Dikshit wrote formal letters of apology, but the result remained unchanged. Vaid was not given the award.

Vaid is one of the most significant and innovative writers of modern Hindi fiction. The purpose of this thesis is to show that accusations of Vaid's fiction as obscene, un-Indian, and lacking social engagement reflect anxieties which are reflected in Hindi literature and criticism of the postcolonial period. Through a detailed analysis of selected fiction of Vaid, we can see that he is an author who has tested the boundaries of acceptability in Hindi fiction. He achieves this through a relentless questioning of dominant paradigms of writing as well as representing his utter dissatisfaction with the way Hindi authors and intellectuals negotiated India's postcolonial modernity. The complex set of circumstances in the postcolonial Indian context regarding how to be both Indian and modern have significantly influenced the Hindi literary environment. We might refer to this as a postcolonial predicament which, in turn, indexes a central concern of postcolonial intellectuals which was how best to engage with western modernity while at the same time creating a modernity which was uniquely Indian. This tension between 'tradition' and 'modernity' included debates about the sacred and the secular, nationalism and problematizing the nationalism, and how to incorporate ideas from the West, without being overly imitative. In the case of Vaid's fiction, the postcolonial predicament also refers to the inability of the Hindi establishment to accept Vaid's more controversial fiction as containing literary merit, as it

challenges and critiques the very foundations on which modern Hindi literature has been assessed. This has led to a stalemate: Vaid has refused to conform to the dictates of what was (and is) considered to constitute authentically Indian and modern Hindi fiction, and those critiquing his fiction refuse to see it as anything but an attack on Indian social space and a demonstration of the fact that he had 'given up' on India.

In the context of Hindi fiction, the situation is made even more complex with the development of literary modernism, and the precarious relationship between Western modernist influences and chronology and what modernism refers to in the Indian context. I argue that as a result of these tensions, and the predominance of realist models in Hindi literature, there emerged a number of protectionist inclinations among Hindi authors, critics and audiences which largely determined what Hindi literature should look like, in terms of what authors believed were the 'needs' of an emergent Indian modernity. Broadly speaking, literature which conformed to dominant ideas regarding Indian modernity and demonstrated a proscriptive style of national commitment gained greater acceptance than literature which did not.

I argue that Vaid's relentless experiments with literary form destabilised a number of cultural binaries which had significant currency in postcolonial Indian discourse, such as the role of Indian tradition with regard to the adoption of Western modernity, and national commitment versus a critical stance vis a vis the nation state. Criticism of Vaid's literature as obscene, un-Indian or lacking social engagement reflect concerns with maintaining these divisions, and are characteristic of the broader postcolonial literary and social milieu. Such criticism has particularly tended to cluster around a number of his more controversial works. Among these are: *Bimal urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ* (1974); *Nasrīn* (1975); *Dūsrā na Koī* (1978) and its sequel, *Dard lā Davā* (1980).

The aspect of his fiction that has led to the greatest debate and controversy relates to Vaid's manner of dealing with so-called transgressive sexual acts and his engagement with discourse on the nation and nationalism, both central themes in a number of postcolonial discourses. This can be seen as confronting the orthodoxies of what were understood to be 'appropriate' postcolonial sensibilities in art and literature. I argue that the subject matter Vaid chooses is not necessarily

controversial; rather it is the manner in which he presents it and his method of bringing together elements which had previously been kept apart in Hindi fiction. Furthermore sentimentalism and solutions are absent in this fiction and irony, satire and existentialist aesthetic modes predominate.

Although the themes of sexual transgression and nation are central, Vaid uses these themes as a platform for exploring what he views as the much more problematic and insoluble existential crises which they reflect. In many cases, at the same time as critiquing the socio-political milieu of postcolonial India, Vaid critiques the Hindi literary environment and his own contemporaries. He explores the limitations, weaknesses and preoccupations of Hindi authors and critics, whose efforts, the texts suggest, demonstrate a distinct lack of intellectual credibility and compromise rather than enable a productive engagement with modernity. This had the effect of both provoking his contemporaries and isolating himself from them.

Theoretical approach

The theoretical approach of the thesis draws on two main fields of study, Postcolonial Studies and Area Studies, more specifically South Asian studies.

The chapters that follow draw extensively from research undertaken by Postcolonial scholars. I utilize historical postcolonial debates and literary postcolonial discourse. Harish Trivedi (2007, 1993a, 1993b) has been particularly influential regarding postcolonial discourse and the need for greater involvement of texts in languages other than English. Bodh Prakash (2009) and G.N. Devy (2002, 1995) have provided useful material on the Hindi literary and critical environment. In the context of the discipline of history in postcolonial debates Partha Chatterjee (1993) has provided critical reading strategies regarding colonial/postcolonial Indian nationalism; and Gyanendra Pandey regarding communalism and nationalism in India (G. Pandey 1992). As one of the main chapters of the thesis deals with representations of postcolonial masculinities, sociologists Sanjay Srivastava (2007) and Steve Derné (2000b) and anthropologist Joseph Alter (1994) have been highly influential as they have significantly contributed to discourse on modern Indian masculinities, a previously largely neglected area of research. Their research has played a large role in informing my discussion of modern masculinities, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Postcolonial literary theorists have contributed a great deal to challenging out-dated orientalist approaches to literature from formerly colonized countries. Literary postcolonial studies arose from a concern to address the Western hegemony of literary canon formation and the literary criticism which supported it. There came a time, belated as it may well have been, when literary critics predominantly situated in English departments felt the importance of revisiting the Eurocentric literary canons, and creating a much greater focus on non-western or Commonwealth literatures. Edward Said's, *Orientalism*, (1978) made an important contribution to how academics looked towards the colonies in an effort to update the approach to the canonisation of literary works, and bring to light literature which had previously been neglected. Studies proliferated which analysed literature from the former colonies, and Indian English literature was one area of particular interest to postcolonial scholars.

With the tremendous enthusiasm for postcolonial literatures that such critics generated, authors such as Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, who have critiqued notions of the nation, came to represent the sub continental component of 'postcolonial literature.' The almost exclusive focus on English Indian literature created the same problem it tried so earnestly to address: the foregrounding of English Indian literature over literature in other Indian languages. The predominance of almost exclusively English language literature in what is becoming the postcolonial literary 'canon' is cause for great concern for many scholars. Harish Trivedi, among others, has taken issue with this situation saying 'the tacit assumption that postcolonial literature and theory exist only in English, the language of the colonizer, is yet another marker of the neo-colonial cultural hegemony of Postcolonial studies' (Trivedi 2004, 1). The idea that postcolonial approaches to literature represent a missed opportunity for area studies to analyse literatures in other languages using the insights of postcolonial scholars is one that is particularly relevant in the case of Hindi literature. Although area studies centres have had considerable exposure to literatures in languages other than English, these literatures have been used more as a language tool than as a source for critical analytic rigor, particularly in the case of the Indian languages (Snell 1990, 122). Since the publication of Snell's article, some excellent research has been done on the analysis of Hindi fiction, particularly by Hindi scholars such as

Damsteegt (1997a, 1997b, 2001); Montaut (1992, 2010); and Dalmia (1997). On the whole however, Snell's concerns are still warranted.

The location of literary postcolonial studies almost exclusively in English departments and the concomitant emphasis on texts in English language means there is significant scope for a much greater involvement of non-English texts in re-defining the meaning of postcolonial analysis. This provides area studies scholars with an opportunity to contribute significantly to postcolonial debates. In their article 'What is Post(-)colonialism?' Mishra and Hodge make a strong argument for the importance of specialized knowledge in fully understanding a text, and the impact this has on discussion regarding the centre and periphery. Using Salman Rushdie's intertextuality to make the point they write:

> For the authors of EWB [Empire Writes Back], once the context of a text is understood, there is nothing terribly difficult about a Sanskrit compound or a hidden cultural text which might require specialized knowledge to identify. Thus if one were to read the song of Gibreel in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* through EWB, its effect within the context is all that would really matter to the reader. The fact that beneath the song is an entire text of Bombay Cinema, which to the bilingual reader, would recall, more specifically, Raj Kapoor's *Shree 420* (1955) is knowledge that EWB must either ignore or relegate to the level of spurious or unnecessary footnote. This supplementarity, however, even in terms of EWB's own design is counter-discursive in a radically different fashion. The supplement, the anecdotal invasion or culture-specific power, is, however, a form of intervention that questions, as supplements always do, the very adequacy of a theory of the centre and its periphery. At the very moment that the narrative is invaded by an intertext from a different centre—the centre and centrality of the Bombay commercial cinema, India's preeminent cultural form—the focus shifts from a fixed centre and its satellite system to a multiplicity of centres in the culture itself. (Mishra and Hodge 1994, 280)

This excerpt effectively highlights the opportunities available for language specialists with regard to postcolonial analysis. In the context of Vaid's fiction, it is critical that the highly specific cultural and linguistic references (which I bring to the analysis from an area studies background) are identified and discussed, in

conjunction with postcolonial debates. Using such an approach, it becomes evident that Vaid's texts refer to multiple centres concurrently. For example English, Hindi and Urdu literary traditions and the Bollywood movie industry all feature as 'centres' at various points in Vaid's texts. The complex and intertextual nature of the texts—drawing from a large number of literary and cultural traditions—lend themselves well to a combined theoretical approach of this kind.

With regard to critical reading strategies provided by South Asian specialists, scholars such as Theo Damsteegt, Francesca Orsini, Alok Rai, and Annie Montaut have significantly influenced my approach. For example I am particularly grateful for my early training in Narratology[1] under the guidance of Theo Damsteegt (Leiden University) as, even though it is not the primary methodology for this thesis, it has significantly influenced the way I read Hindi texts and serves as a continual reminder of the importance of narrative structure.

Primary sources

The analysis of Vaid's fiction in Chapter Two focuses on three short stories entitled *Samādhi* (Trance) (1962), *Bimal, Kāfī Hāus aur Buniyādī Savāl* (Bimal, the Coffee House and the Fundamental Questions) (1965), and *Ek thā Bimal* (A Man Called Bimal) (1962). In Chapter Three, as well as these three short stories, I supplement the analysis utilising material from the novella (or, collection of 10 short stories) called *Uske Bayān* (His Testimonies) (1974). The editions of the three Bimal stories I have used in the thesis, *Samādhi; Bimal, Kāfī Hāus aur Buniyādī Savāl* (BCFQ) and *Ek thā Bimal* (ETB) are as printed in *Sampūrṇ Kahāniyāṁ 1 1951-1998: Merā Duśman* (Vaid 1999a, 341-393) The version of *Uske Bayān* I have used can be found in *Sampūrṇ Kahāniyāṁ -2 1951-1998:Rāt kī Sair* (Vaid 1999b, 67-102).

The literature chosen for detailed analysis in Chapters Two and Three has been selected on the basis that it best represents Vaid's engagement with the postcolonial circumstances previously mentioned. The texts are replete with references, both in explicit and abstract form, to the themes of sexual transgression and nationalism which are central to my analysis. The trilogy of

[1] The Narratological method I refer to here can be found in (Bal 1997) and (Rimmon-Kenan 1983). Damsteegt's application of narratological method in the context of Hindi fiction is particularly comprehensive (Damsteegt 1997b).

Bimal stories has also been chosen as Vaid situates them as creative forerunners to his novel *Bimal Urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ* (1974) which is widely held to be one of his most controversial pieces of fiction and which led to a gread deal of hostility among his Hindi fiction contemporaries and critics. Many consider this novel to represent a significant change in direction for Vaid and the point at which he crossed the boundaries of acceptability in Hindi fiction and sold his soul to the 'American way'. His difficulty in getting the novel published is evidence of the extent to which it was considered inappropriate, to the point where publishers did not want to have their names associated with it. I have used the short fiction, rather than the novel as the basis for analysis as the stories represent the germination of ideas which became fully fledged in the novel *Bimal urf Jāeṁ to Jāeṁ Kahāṁ.* Furthermore there is a substantial gap of 17 years between the publishing of Vaid's first novel, *Uskā Bacpan* in Hindi in 1957 and his second novel *Bimal urf Jāeṁ to Jāeṁ Kahāṁ* in 1974. Although this was a large gap in terms of novels published, it is argued that Vaid spent the years 1957-1974 experimenting with literary form, culminating in the exemplary high-modernism of the 1970s which is unique in its contribution to Hindi literature. My point is that the period leading up to the publication of the highly criticised novels was one of creative consolidation for Vaid both in India and the United States. Thus the trilogy of stories centred on the character Bimal is better placed historically for the analysis than the novel which was belatedly published.

Uske Bayān is a novella made up of 10 freestanding short stories, which were written between 1972 and 1973. The novella was published in 1974. I have chosen *Uske Bayān* to supplement the analysis in Chapter Three ('Dialogues with the Nation'), as there are a number of sections in the novella which deal specifically with issues of authenticity and the concept of nation, as well as criticism of the Hindi literary environment (in abstract form). Significantly for this thesis *Uske Bayān* is based on the reflections of an expatriate artist (Vaid 1999b, 67) and is highly abstract in form. The abstraction of characterization in *Uske Bayān* also provides an interesting contrast with the explicit characterization of Bimal, the main protagonist of the trilogy of Bimal stories. The abstract 'he/that' of *Uske Bayān* shares similar anxieties and psychological dilemmas to the much more explicit character Bimal, and shades of the semi-autobiographical nature of the exiled intellectual are prominent in both pieces.

In Chapter Four non-fiction literature written by Vaid is utilised whereby he presents his own views on the Hindi literary environment and his role as an author within it. Sources used include *Javāb Nahīṁ: Sākṣātkār aur Ātmsākṣātkār* (Vaid 2002b) a book of interviews and self-interviews; *Śikast kī Āvāz (Nibandh/Anibandh)* (Vaid 2006), a collection of non-fiction essays and interviews; and *Sobtī-Vaid Saṃvād: Lekhan aur Lekhak* (Sobtī and Vaid 2007), discussions held between Vaid and renowned author and contemporary of Vaid, Krishna Sobti.

Contribution of the thesis

This thesis provides an original contribution to the study of postcolonial literature in three main ways. First, the choice of subject matter is original, that is, the author and literature chosen for analysis have not been dealt with in this level of detail before. Second, in terms of the more theoretical contribution, the use of postcolonial theory in relation to Vaid's Hindi short fiction has also not been undertaken previously. In analysing his fiction through the lens of postcolonial studies, the thesis contributes both to area studies, and postcolonial literary studies. Finally, and probably most importantly, the analysis provides a critique of the placement of some of Vaid's more controversial pieces of fiction on the periphery of Hindi fiction and concludes that it is the crisis in Hindi criticism and postcolonial anxieites reagarding what constituted good Hindi fiction which has led to misjudgements about his fiction. This thesis challenges the positioning of Vaid's literature on the periphery and suggests that he is one of the most innovative, perceptive and significant writers of Hindi literature. He has relentlessly tested boundaries of acceptability in Hindi fiction, and has refused to conform to normative ideas of what Hindi literature should look like. It will be shown that Vaid wrote within a complex postcolonial environment and wrote directly to it, without being restrained by it. As a result his fiction has been seen as confrontational and has at times been rejected, but accusations of a lack of authenticity, un-Indianness or vulgarity suggest more about the postcolonial environment than they do about the literature itself.

Progression of the Thesis

Chapter One is entitled 'The Postcolonial Socio-Political and Literary Milieu and Biography of Vaid'. Firstly, the Indian socio-political climate in the post-

independence period, between independence and the early 1970s is outlined as it provides important background material for references Vaid makes to the Indian milieu of the time. The outline offers an overview of some pivotal aspects of India's history. This, however, is illustrative, rather than exhaustive, in terms of locating Vaid and his fiction in a highly charged postcolonial context. Specifically, moments in this period of India's history that are most relevant to the fiction examined in Chapters Two and Three are discussed. Secondly in Chapter One, the Hindi literary environment and how modernity and the literary trend of modernism were incorporated into Hindi literary production are considered. This overview of the Hindi literary environment includes discussion of the confluence of progressivism, realism and modernism in post-independence Hindi literature. This confluence affected Hindi literary output and criticism in significant ways, particularly with regard to what constituted 'authentic', 'Indian' or socially responsible literature in a rapidly modernizing and developing India. The final section of Chapter One provides a brief biography of Vaid and his positioning within the socio-political milieu.

In Chapter Two: 'Intimacy and Solitude in a Loveless City', I consider material from the texts which refer to so-called sexual transgression, and the way Vaid problematizes Indian masculinity and the crises faced by postcolonial male characters. Specifically the ambivalent, uncertain masculinity of the main character Bimal will be discussed and contrasted with the more 'macho' style exhibited by his contemporaries. The sexualisation of literary discourse (which may have offended many) and the way the men negotiate 'modern' women in the texts will also be considered. In the final section of Chapter Two, the metropolis as a site of alienation and a place where 'true love' does not exist is discussed as the setting in which the so-called 'transgressive' sexual acts occur. Although the chapter focusses on provocative examples from the literature which deal with sex and sexuality, the texts will be viewed in terms of the deeper sense of alienation and despair which they articulate. The chapter explores the way Vaid uses sex (more specifically sexual reference) to problematize ideas of intimacy and isolation, and indicate a much deeper set of anxieties taking place in the internal world of the main protagonist.

Chapter Three, entitled 'Dialogues with the Nation' focuses on Vaid's discourse regarding postcolonial nationalism. By considering how he engages with India as a newly formed nation and the nationalist sentiment as it appears in society and literature, I look closely at the context in which accusations of Vaid as un-Indian and overly westernised have arisen. Primarily the way Vaid's literature deeply engages with the new Indian nation through rupture and dissonance will be examined. By upsetting dominant paradigms of how Indianness is constructed he demonstrates his intimate connection with the landscape of postcolonial India and a commitment to exposing perceived hypocrisies. The chapter is divided into three main sections. Firstly the role of tradition and the burden of ancestors as experienced by the character Bimal is explored, and the way in which Vaid challenges and confronts the roles of the mother and father in adding to, rather than alleviating, the crises faced by Bimal as a son of the nation. Secondly the thesis considers the questions facing the nation as they are presented in the text and the disconnect between these questions and 'fundamental questions' (*buniyādī savāl*) faced by Bimal which are, by definition, insoluble. Thirdly, the language problematic in the postcolonial nationalist environment and the way in which Vaid's texts engage with the national language discourse of the period will be discussed. The role Vaid's multilingualism has in terms of provoking criticism, and the impact his mixture of Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Sanskrit and English has on the text and how his language choice was construed as provocative is also considered. In each section, the focus is on how the texts confront and attack dominant nationalist paradigms in the postcolonial Indian milieu.

Following on from Chapters Two and Three, which are the main analytical chapters dealing with Vaid's fiction, in Chapter Four: 'Criticism, Rebuttal and the Crisis in Hindi Criticism', some of the main criticisms of Vaid's fiction which centre on charges of obscenity, a lack of Indianness (and the related charge of borrowing too heavily from the West), and a lack of social engagement are detailed. In Chapter Four, consideration is given to the nature of the criticisms, the critical context from which they arose, and the crisis in Hindi criticism which they can be seen to reflect. This chapter also considers Vaid's own comments (using non-fiction sources) regarding such accusations and the situation in Hindi literature as he has interpreted it. For example, Vaid reflects on why some of his literature has

been rejected, and some well-received, and the choices he has made as an author which he acknowledges have provoked criticism.

In the Conclusion the significance of the main findings of the thesis will be summarized and evaluated, and some suggestions offered for future research opportunities.

Chapter One: The Postcolonial Socio-Political and Literary Milieu and Biography of K.B. Vaid

The Socio-Political Milieu in Postcolonial India

The following outline of the period of India's history from independence into the 1970s is designed to provide a socio-political context for the analysis that follows in Chapters Two and Three. It is important in terms of providing critical background material as there are many references to the political and social issues facing India in the post-Independence period in the texts analysed, some of which are the implied fundamental (and insoluble) questions (*Buniyādī Savāl*) which Vaid refers to repeatedly in the story *Bimal, the Coffeehouse and the Fundamental Questions* (*Bimal, Kāfī Hāus aur Buniyādī Savāl*). As stated earlier, the intention of the outline that follows is that it is illustrative, not exhaustive and highlights major incidences in the post-Independence period in India. The period covered is immediately prior to Partition concluding with the defeat of Indira Gandhi after the National Emergency of 1975-77.

By 1946, after a long and complicated struggle for greater autonomy and ultimately independence from British rule, it was clear that Britain would no longer hold onto India as a colony. It was also clear that the Congress Party and the Muslim League could not come to a mutually acceptable resolution as to how to deal with creating a fair and equal nation which would accommodate a large Muslim population in a Hindu majority India.

By March 1946 Viceroy Louis Mountbatten had come to India with one main task: arranging the independence of India from the British Crown. By 1947 Mountbatten had announced that power would be transferred to two states and revised the date forward to 15 August 1947, thus India and Pakistan became separate and independent nations with Jawaharlal Nehru and Muhammad Ali Jinnah the respective heads of state.

It is important particularly for this thesis that in addition to ideologies of Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah, which inevitably take centre stage in discussing India and Pakistan's independence, the contributions of other key figures in India's nationalist struggle are referred to. These include J.P. Narayan (1902-1979), a

Marxist freedom fighter and campaigner for alleviating rural poverty and backwardness and Bhagat Singh (1907-1931), freedom fighter and martyr. The latter although predating the period of the texts, is also referred to in the literature analysed. While these figures get only a passing mention in many surveys of this period of Indian history, they were figures who loomed large in Indian consciousness. In the case of Bhagat Singh, the Bollywood movie industry and popular iconography has had a significant role in keeping the national memory alive in more recent decades.

As a culmination of forces, all of which led ultimately to independence and the creation of two states, the subcontinent was partitioned. The rapid and ill-conceived execution of this task brought with it atrocities and mass violence on an unprecedented scale. As millions of Muslims fled India to escape to the new state of Pakistan and Hindus on the Pakistani side fled into India, any hopes of a peaceful and prosperous start as an independent nation had been dashed. Gandhi's ahimsa (non-violence) campaigns were scuttled, culminating in his assassination by Hindu fundamentalist Nathuram Godse in 1948, and Nehru was left holding the mantle.

> The flow of refugees became a flood; word of atrocities, rapes and mass killings brought the inevitable retaliations. As the violence escalated, ghost trains chuffed silently across the new frontier carrying nothing but corpses. In the 'land of the five rivers' the waters ran with blood and the roads ran with mangled migrants. The twenty thousand troops who materialised to police the transfer proved at best ineffective, at worst infected by the madness... East to West and West to East perhaps ten million fled for their lives in the greatest exodus in recorded history... Two hundred thousand at least, possibly as many as a million, were massacred between August and October in the Punjab partition and the associated riots. (Keay 2001, 508)

Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956) warrants mention here as a significant figure of the period not only as author of the Indian Constitution, but as major campaigner for the upliftment of the Dalit population. His ongoing debates with Gandhi regarding the role and position of Dalits in Hindu society and his consequent rejection of Hinduism and conversion to Buddhism brought about an awareness of the Dalit situation and hypocrisies of the system which influenced Indian politics. This focus on Dalit rights and the outlawing of untouchability in the Constitution of

1950 influenced thinking on caste and class and is a theme which gets carried through into Hindi literature in the postcolonial period[2]. This influence of caste/class politics becomes a central theme of Hindi literature and contributes to discussion on subject-or content-based literature.

On a broader level, the world after the Second World War had seen the rise of communism in the Eastern block and soon after in China, and disenfranchised masses around the world started to think that communism might be a viable option; this rise in the popularity of Marxist and Communist ideals was a significant factor in influencing trends in Hindi literature. Nehru was committed to a non-alignment policy, hoping to keep open good relationships with communist countries like China and Russia as well as capitalist countries such as the United States and Britain. Enthusiastic about forming strong Asian relationships, regarding Sino-Indian friendship critical in a peaceful Asia, and empathetic with the socialist cause, by 1954 Nehru had cemented a Sino-Indian accord and was championing the slogan *Hindī-Chinni bhāi bhāi*, 'Indians and Chinese are brothers' (Wolpert 2000, 364). He was also committed to a series of five-year economic plans, with rigid state ownership a feature. Economically he had an unenviable task ahead of him, having lost half of the Punjab, a major wheat producing area, now part of Pakistan. He was also faced with an ever-increasing population, famine and unemployment.

India had fought two wars with Pakistan in 1947 and 1965, and the India China relationship had soured with China's advancement into Indian territory, and Nehru's five-year economic plans had not made any significant inroads into India's poverty as her population continued to grow at exceptionally high rates. 1965 is also significant as the year when the politics of India's official language came to a head. Pro-Hindi campaigners had hoped that by 1965, the original deadline for the phasing out of English as an official language, Hindi would become the sole official language of India. This however was not the case and by 1967 the amendment to the Official Languages Act of 1963 stated that 'English would be retained as "associated additional official language"' (Rai 2000, 117; see also King 1997).

[2] For an informative discussion on caste politics in India see Dirks (2001).

The question of language in India has a long and complex history, and is intimately connected to questions of nationalism and identity in the subcontinent[3]. In the context of this thesis, a sensitivity not only to the politics of language regarding the relationship between Hindi and English, but also the turbulent relationship between Hindi and Urdu is needed. In the post-independence era, 'Hindi' came to be associated with India and Hindus and Urdu with Pakistan and Muslims. Sensitivity is needed to observe not only direct references to language issues in the texts analysed, but also to the way Vaid uses Hindi itself as a language to explore this complex set of circumstances. In the postcolonial milieu, word choice of an author or speaker, can be read as a political statement. Thus highly Sanskritized Hindi was read as being pro-Hindi and overtly nationalist, whereas language influenced by Urdu could be read to indicate a connection with Pakistan and Muslim sentiment which was unwelcome in Hindu nationalist circles. Vaid's choice of language and his linguistic background will be discussed in the section dealing with his biography and also in more detail in Chapter Three ('Dialogues with the Nation'). Alok Rai (2000) in his book *Hindi Nationalism* describes very effectively some of the anxieties around language in the context of Hindi and India:

> 'Hindi' (also 'Urdu'...) had, perforce to distance itself from the common shared domain—and so produce a language that was drained of local colour and fragrance, deprived of emotional warmth and resonance. If this struggle had remained confined to the original level of the script it would have consisted only in gaining official recognition for a "difference" that was non-negotiable and non-compoundable of course, but which was also, reassuringly, *out there*. But when one moves to the level of language proper, *and this is crucial*, the boundary between Hindi and Urdu is inevitably porous. It is infinitely, endlessly negotiable, not only in public space but in the privacy of one's mind. Here is a wound that can (and must) always be kept green, a trauma that can be inflamed at will—an offence that can be renewed without fear of interdiction. This makes language—and particularly a language system like Hindi-Urdu—an almost ideal vehicle for a vicious identity politics. The 'enemy' is not merely within—he is, with a

[3] This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three: *Dialogues with the Nation*. References which discuss language politics in India include (Rai 2000), (King 1997), and for an account of language politics in the period 1920-1940 see Orsini (2002).

dangerously convenient economy, oneself! (Rai 2000, 104-05, emphases in original).

The fact that slogans such as *'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'*[4] became part of the process of identity formation in the colonial period and also in the postcolonial context is one example of the significance of language politics in the Indian milieu. These language struggles all influenced the way Hindi was used and the extent to which there were certain expectations regarding the use of the language in literary output.

Language is just one arena where the nationalist struggle played out; the adoption and development of the concept of Hindutva, as coined by leading ideologue of rightist Hindu thought Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), and embraced by many other Hindu nationalist organizations. The development of Hindu nationalism saw the proliferation of many rightist groups, for example the *Rāṣṭriya Swayaṁsevak Saṅgh* (RSS), originally founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925. In the nationalist struggle such groups gathered momentum, and more and more organizations were created to join the Sangh Parivar, the umbrella organization of a significant number of Hindu nationalist groups[5]. Vaid expresses a deep suspicion of the secular nationalism of the era, with many textual examples critiquing the role of religion and religious nationalism within so-called secular politics. Vaid's suspicion of secular nationalism and the role of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics are discussed in Chapter Three. It is of particular importance as the dominant discourse regarding nation and nationalism has significantly influenced criticism of Vaid's literature as 'un-Indian' or overly westernized. It is sufficient at this point to note that Hindu nationalism and the influence of Hinduism in secular nationalism[6] are central issues in the postcolonial period of India, not just in terms of language, but also political and social ideology.

In terms of the central government leadership in India in the 1960s, we see a strong Congress Nehru-led government until his death in 1964, followed by a

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[4] This slogan arises in Vaid's literature and will be discussed in Chapter Three: 'Dialogues with the Nation'.

[5] I will return to a discussion of Hindutva and Hindu nationalism in Chapter Three. For discussion of Hindu right-wing organizations such as the RSS (Rāṣṭriya Swayaṁsevak Saṅg) and the VHP (Viśva Hindu Pariśad) see Hansen (1999), Basu et al. (1993) and Prakash (2002).

[6] The role of religion in Indian secularism has been discussed in *The Politics of Indian Secularism* (Upadhyaya 1992) and is discussed in Chapter Three, 'Dialogues with the Nation'.

brief stint by Lal Bahadur Shastri. By 1966 Indira Gandhi had become Prime Minister of India. Although very popular in her early years as Prime Minister, making great gains via the Green Revolution, by the 1970s there was increasing opposition to her leadership. By 1975 she declared the National Emergency, in what was a last resort effort to protect herself from being thrown out of office, or into jail on account of legal charges[7]. By 1977 she lifted the emergency and the Congress party was defeated at the subsequent election. Indira Gandhi's rule in this first stint as Prime Minister (she was returned to office in 1981), as well as being associated with corruption, is also known for the government's strict and poorly executed sterilization policy. The strong Congress leadership in the period post-Independence is a subject which Vaid explores in his short fiction. Furthermore, the impact of Congress ideology on the Indian literati and discussions that were part of coffeehouse culture in the 1960s is a major concern for Vaid. He problematizes the discussions and the manner in which the intellectuals of the country talked about the major issues facing the country. A direct confrontation with the political ideology of the 1960s and the corruption associated with it is played out particularly obviously in the story entitled: *Bimal, the Coffee House and the Fundamental Questions.*

Having provided a brief outline of the socio-political milieu of the post-Independence period in India, as is relevant to this thesis, discussion now proceeds to the Hindi literary environment. The focus of discussion is on the development of ideals and forms in Hindi literature from the time of Premchand to the development of modernism in Hindi fiction, and the rise of *nayī kahānī*, or New Short Story as the dominant literary trend in Hindi in the 1950s and 1960s.

Realism, Progressivism and the development of Modernism in Hindi Fiction

Premchand, Progressivism and the influence of All India Progressive Writer's Association (AIPWA)

The development of Hindi fiction was heavily influenced by the role of Premchand as one of the most prominent writers of Hindi fiction and first Chair of the *All India Progressive Writers Association* (AIPWA). The influence of progressivist ideals on

[7] For informative accounts of the circumstances of Indira Gandhi's National Emergency see for example: *India After Gandhi* (Guha 2007, 493-521); *Vishnu's Crowded Temple* (Misra 2008, 342-354); and *A New History of India* (Wolpert 2000, 395-405).

postcolonial Hindi fiction and the commitment to social purpose and authenticity that it involved is central in understanding some of the criticisms of Vaid's more controversial fiction. In the case of Hindi literature, the confluence of progressivism, modernism (as a literary trend) and the broader discourse in India regarding how to be both Indian and modern in constructing a uniquely Indian style of modernity, all contributed to a highly complex literary environment. This resulted in a significant discourse regarding what Hindi literature should look like in the interests of best serving the newly modernizing, and recently independent, nation. In the paragraphs that follow the developments that have led me to this conclusion and the way in which it evolved in the Hindi literary context are detailed.

In terms of the existing literary lineage of modernism in Hindi fiction, it is important to consider the role of Premchand and the AIPWA. The progressivist tendencies in Hindi literature which were established by Premchand in the 1930s, continued to influence the production of Hindi literature for many more decades[8]. The overshadowing effect of Premchand's contribution and the impact of his 'realistic idealism' on Hindi fiction cannot be overstated as they permanently altered literary sensibilities with regards to social purpose and the importance of proving Indianness and authenticity. The establishment and continuation of the *Progressive Writer's Association* has played a significant role in contributing to the specific context of Hindi fiction and criticism.

An example of the enormous effect of Premchand and the Progressive trend in Hindi literature can be seen in a statement made by Sisir Kumar Das in *A History of Indian Literature* where he comments on Premchand's contribution to Hindi fiction: 'Like all other novels of Premchand, Godān is a record of *authentic experience* and of the suffering and struggle of the Indian rural poor. It is now a classic of *modern Indian literature*' (S. Das 1995, 283, emphasis my own). Key questions in the following section which emerge are: what influence did these heavily Progressivist inclinations have on the development and criticism of Hindi literature? Why in a survey taken as late as 1980, does Premchand's novel *Godān* (first published in 1936) still top a list of readers' choice of novels? (Mukherjee

[8] For a discussion of the development of literary modernism and the influence of the All-India Progressive Writers Association see Mukherjee (2008, 90ff.)

1985, 148). It should be emphasized that I am not disputing the Premchand talent or eminence as a writer, rather, seeking to problematize the ideas that followed about what constituted authentic Hindi fiction.

In 1935 Premchand, printed a Hindi translation of the AIPWA manifesto which had been agreed upon in England by Indian writers and intellectuals and some British literary figures, some months earlier. Carlo Coppola describes this manifesto as 'the most basic document in the development of Socialist Realism in India' (Coppola 1974, 5). Of interest in Coppola's article are the differences between the Hindi translations of the manifesto for an Indian audience in the version published in *Hams* literary magazine (founded by Premchand in 1930)and the English original. The most important difference for the current discussion is that between the original English version of statement 10, and the correlating Hindi version printed in *Hams*. In the London version of the AIPWA manifesto, statement number 10 reads as follows:

> While claiming to be the inheritors of the best traditions of Indian civilization, we shall criticize ruthlessly, in all its political, economic and cultural aspects, the spirit of reaction in our country; and we shall foster through interpretive and creative works (both native and foreign resources) everything that will lead our country to the new life for which it is striving. (Coppola 1974, 6)

Premchand's Hindi translation/transcreation of the same statement reads:

> Preserving the best traditions of India, we will comment pitilessly on the decadent aspects of our country and will depict in a critical and creative manner all those things with which we may arrive at our destination. (Coppola 1974, 7)

Coppola points out that reference to authors using 'both native and foreign resources' which appears in the English original, is left out in the Hindi version, Premchand preferring a much more general statement (Coppola 1974, 11). The tendency to 'set things Indian in the foreground' (Coppola 1974, 11) which Coppola notes as the difference between the versions is an important point in relation to the formulation of ideas, in the early stages of the development of modern Hindi literature, of what authentically Indian writing should look like,

particularly with regard to foreign influence. The influence of the AIPWA manifesto and the subsequent formation of a very active AIPWA in India in the late 1930s dominated the literary scene by the 1940s, becoming increasingly 'doctrinaire and more specifically communist' (Roadarmel 1969, 43).

In the context of progressive writing where realism became the predominant genre, authenticity became a primary goal of writing. 'Real' India came to be associated with the villages and, in keeping with the communist ideals of progressivism, literature which could be seen to represent the workers or disenfranchised masses was considered to represent a more authentic version of reality than fiction based in the urban setting. The extent to which the progressive writing movement inhibited the development of other forms of literary creativity has been discussed by Pandey (1975) in some detail. He argues:

> Although the progressive movement succeeded in creating sympathy for the exploited and the downtrodden, it sacrificed the individual at the altar of socialism, and objective realism at the door of socialist realism. It became a doctrinaire communist movement issuing pamphlets in the form of poems and thus lost the support of many a broad-minded liberal progressive poet. (I. Pandey 1975, 122)

He goes on to give credit to the Progressive writing movement for its role in awakening social consciousness but criticises it with regard to the development of literary form:

> The great success of this movement lies in an awakening to social consciousness and to an awareness of the hardships of the common people. This is the most important contribution of the progressive movement which brought a healthy and optimistic attitude towards life. So far as the form of poetry is concerned, it suffered much in their hands as they did not attach any importance to the refinement and beauty of art. (I. Pandey 1975, 123)

The Progressive approach emphasised content over form, in keeping with the idea that literature was to be used as a prescriptive social tool. The content of the literature dictated the literary form, content was an essential part of a communist ideology, and the literary model should be realism.

Pandey's concern that the contribution of progressive writing with regard to social consciousness came at the cost of literary formal innovation is reiterated by Lago in a collection of papers discussing the influence of Marxism on Indian literature.

> The novels and plays of present-day "Progressive" Indian writers cannot be faulted for sincerity and depth of social concern; but, if the excerpts here are a representative sampling, they tend too often to fall short of the standards of literature that endures. When judged as literature rather than as propaganda, long stretches of these excerpts are awkward and inept and therefore boring; it would be difficult to convince non-Indian readers (and perhaps Indian readers as well) that this literature will endure, or that it matters even in passing. (Lago 1974, 192)

Lago's concern over a lack of literary craftsmanship continues:

> India's "Progressive" writers often seem to have difficulty in coming to terms with this necessity for combining purposive writing with literary craftsmanship. They tend too often to scamp craftsmanship in favour of passing polemics, and they seem to fear that a retreat into mysticism is the only alternative to propaganda. (Lago 1974, 192)

The idea of authenticity and social usefulness as an essential feature of Hindi literature was particularly prominent for Premchand as were his views regarding the role of the writer with regard to social uplift and responsibility, with moralizing sometimes 'heavy-handed' (Roadarmel 1969, 26). Premchand's views on the social role of literature are made clear in the following comment:

> Literature is the creator of social ideals. When the ideals are debased, the decline of society is only a matter of time...The ideal of Indian literature is sacrifice and self-denial. (Premchand in Nilsson 1992, 321)

The Progressive Writers Association manifesto of 1935 in London, translated into Hindi and published also in 1935 in Premchand's literary journal *Hams*, foreshadowed what became the immense influence of Marxism and progressivism on modern Hindi literature. Indian writers made a clear connection between communism and India's freedom and emphasized the role of literature in assisting India's struggle for independence (Coppola 1974, 9). Social Realism became the

ideal style of literature for the progressives, heavily influenced by Marxist ideology. Marxism had a strong influence on writers and advocated a new reading of Indian history based on class war and the economic exploitation of the poor by the rich (Machwe 1978, 63). The progressives concentrated on 'the real India' which was rural and poor India and also on the workers in the cities and their problems (Machwe 1978, 64).

In the context of the dashed hopes of independence and India's increasing problem with poverty, Marxist ideology gained much support among intellectuals and political leaders. Progressivism became a hallmark of the Indian intelligentsia and in this context many of the writers of the post-independence period were members of, or at least affiliated with, the Communist Party of India (CPI). Writers' and artists' Progressivist alignment correlated with strong views regarding the purpose of Hindi literature in the post-Independence period, particularly the 1940s.

The obvious communist influence over the Progressive writing period was soon met by modernism and a much greater focus in literature on the 'art-for-art's sake' model rather than using literature as a didactic tool for the communist/Marxist ideals. What we see in the Indian adaption/adoption of modernism, in the literary context at least, is an adoption of particular forms of modernism that best suit India's post-independence socio-political climate.

Beginnings of modernism and experimentalism in Hindi fiction

In 1943 'Agyeya' (Sachidanandan Hirananda Vatsyayan), the Hindi author credited with being the leading light of experimentalism in Hindi fiction, edited a volume of poetry entitled *Tara Saptaka*. This volume, consisting of poems by seven different authors is recognised as marking the beginning of experimentalism or *prayogvād* in Hindi poetry and signalled a significant shift in emphasis from the progressive to the experimental (I. Pandey 1975, 119). The characteristic shift of the experimentalism of Agyeya and the *Tara Saptaka* poets arose from the poets' wish to 'communicate to the society the deeply felt experiences of an individual. It is this challenge that forces the new poet to make necessary experiments with language and style' (I. Pandey 1975, 131), and is markedly different from the socialist realism of the progressive writers discussed in the previous section.

The experimentalism of Agyeya and the *Tara Saptaka* poets came to be identified with the development of modernism, in its heavier focus on individual states of mind and psychological insights. Regarding nomenclature, Agyeya and his colleagues became known as *prayogvādīs* or 'experimentalists' and this was associated with the development of modernism in Hindi literature. Thus the term *prayogvād* became synonymous with modernism which, more accurately would have been *adhuniktāvād* (modernism). The environment in which this variety of modernism arose is significant for a reading of Vaid's work as he sees as problematic the interpretation in Hindi literary circles of what it means to be 'experimental' in terms of a much broader tradition of experimentalism in world literature. Furthermore the meeting of the progressivism discussed in the previous section with the experimentalism of Agyeya and others had interesting implications regarding social purposiveness in what became Hindi's modernist literature. Harish Trivedi has made some useful observations regarding the connection in the Indian context between progressivism and modernism, and the fact that a large number of the authors who became associated with the *prayogvādī* movement also identified as Marxists or Communists:

> Despite their divergent and even opposed tendencies, the chronologically overlapping movements of modernism and progressivism came to be, more so in India than in the West, strange bedfellows. Of the seven modernist Hindi poets in Ajneya's *Tara Saptaka*, for instance, as many as five forthrightly declared themselves in their prefatory statements to be either Marxists or Communists or in two cases both! (Trivedi 1993b, 219)

The extent to which ideas of social purpose and the closely connected ideals of authenticity and 'Indianness' as promulgated by Premchand and the AIPWA continued to predominate in the assessment of what constituted 'good' and authentic literature in the modernist movement is of particular interest. The intersection of progressivism with the development of literary modernism and experimentalism and the massive social trauma of partition created an immensely complicated and rich setting for the development and criticism of the short story genre in Hindi literature. Any modernist approach which was seen to be too sympathetic to Western methods or somehow purely imitative of Western art forms was perceived as a 'selling-out' to the Western way and offensive to

nationalist sentiment. It is in the context of this intersection that Vaid emerges as a writer and continues to experiment, at times radically, with literary form and meets with an increasingly unreceptive audience.

Prominent features of Hindi literature of the 1950s and 1960s such as alienation, exile, a focus on the psychological, and a general feeling of a re-examination of the existence of humanity, are all features of modernist fiction on a more international level. In the environment after World War One, writers such as James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound epitomised this modernist aesthetic in the progression away from romanticism. It is relevant here that European and American modernists were also criticised for an approach that was seen to be aloof and for being disconnected from real social issues, to the point that people failed to see any point in their endless experimentation and creation of literary form. Modernist authors looked to each other for support as they increasingly found meaning in form, only adding to the sense that they were socially removed and out of touch with everyday reality[9].

There are a number of important points to make regarding the reception of modernism (in terms of a global movement) in India, and the extent to which it is an adapted or domesticated version of modernism in the West. Although beginning in the late 1800s, the height of literary and artistic modernism in the West is usually connected with the enormous trauma and social disruption created by the lead up to and devastating upheaval of the First World War. While the social and political situation in India in this period was very different, some have argued that the independence and subsequent partitioning of the sub-continent in 1947 created the social turmoil and rupture which heralded Indian engagement with modernism in a more significant way. The disillusionment that followed Partition and the horrors which India witnessed provoked a shock of similar gravity to the impact of the First World War on the West nearly thirty years earlier. Regarding the themes of alienation and displacement which were central to the modernist

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[9] For discussion of the development, stages, and major themes in European and American literary modernism see for example: *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism* (Kalaidjian 2005); and *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (Williams 1989). For the relationship between modernism and nationalism, specifically the form of the modernist novel being interpreted as signifying a lack of political commitment see *Modernism, Nationalism and the Novel* (Lewis 2000).

literary trend in Europe and which found expression in Hindi in the aftermath of Partition, Nilsson states:

> The works of Western philosophers, intellectuals and writers, like Nietzsche, Freud, Marx, James, Lawrence, Joyce etc. came to India in a steady stream and educated Indians found them relevant to a certain degree. But the illogicality, the senselessness, displacement and alienation found a true place and genuine expression in Hindi literature after the partition of India in 1947 when a major historical displacement took place. (Nilsson 1992, 322)

Modernism as an identifiable literary trend in India gained notoriety with Agyeya and the *Tara Saptaka* poets. After Partition writers were caught in the historical moment between despair and horror and the need for India to progress particularly in technology and science, looking to the West for ideas regarding rapid modernization. This meant that modernism as a literary trend in Hindi fiction was particularly pronounced in the 1950s and 1960s, the new short story trend (*nāyī kahānī*) was a popular genre for post-Independence authors. This was also the period when writers began to look to other places in the world (that is not just to English literature) for inspiration in the modernist era. This emphasis on gaining creative inspiration from a variety of literary traditions which had previously not been utilised in Hindi fiction has been discussed by Trivedi:

> Hindi authors started to look further afield for creative inspiration, inspired by authors from Latin America, Eastern Europe (e.g. Czech literature), and Central Europe (France in particular). One of Hindi's most prominent authors, Nirmal Verma, spent many years living and writing in Czechoslovakia, and translated Milan Kundera's fiction into Hindi before it appeared in English. (Trivedi 1993b, 223)

The writers were increasingly influenced by the French surrealists and existentialists such as Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). Furthermore, as the impact of the ideas of Freud and Nietzsche was being felt around the world, this increased focus on the individual consciousness and subconscious became a hallmark of modernist fiction. K. Satchidanandan has written on literary modernism in the Indian context as follows:

> Literary modernism in its Indian form had meant an articulation of the angst and alienation, the divided self, of the Indian caught between the gilded image of his precolonial past and his squalid present that roamed the crowded thoroughfares of the post-industrialist metropolis. At the ontological level, it meant a search for the lost identity of the individual: a quest that often bordered on the metaphysical. (Satchidanandan 2004, 4)

In the same article Satchidanandan goes into more detail about modernism in the Indian milieu, stating: 'The most dominant of these [modernist] streams may be termed the *progressive modernists'* (Satchidanandan 2006, 5). My argument is that this progressivist influence in the development of modernism in the Hindi literary context, meant that certain varieties of modernism dominated over more experimental varieties. That is to say the 'art for art's sake' model which is central to modernism, not to mention the avant-garde and the experimental, becomes severely limited if it coexists with proscriptions of a paradigm which asserts that literature should be socially useful, or demonstrate national commitment. In the case of postcolonial Hindi literature, modernism co-existed with progressive and Marxist ideology rather than replacing it. This had considerable impact on both the literary output of the postcolonial era and also on the Hindi critical environment. As part of the analysis in Chapter Three, it will be shown how Vaid's fiction confronts this 'heavy' progressive and Marxist influence, and in Chapter Four discussion on the impact of progressivism and Marxism on Hindi literary criticism will be provided.

In interviews in Delhi in 2006, I had the opportunity to talk with prominent author and editor of the influential Hindi magazine *Hams*, Rajendra Yadav. I should preface this by stating that Yadav has been associated with the Progressive group of writers for many decades, and that the founder and first editor of *Hams* was indeed Premchand. Discussing Hindi literature broadly and also Vaid's contribution to the field, Yadav said:

> You can't treat Hindi literature like other places in the world....Literature is based on its society, it is not universal, every country's literature is rooted in society....There are three basic precepts for today in relation to Indian literature 1. *suffering*, 2. *struggle*, 3. *the dream*. We can't afford the luxury of exclusivist literature. India is fighting for existence....Dalit writing and

> women's writing are more articulate, *genuine* and *authentic* [italics my own], they are carrying literature forward. (Interviewed on 26 May 2003)

Chapter Four offers more comments from Rajendra Yadav, particularly in relation to the crisis in Hindi criticism and his views on Vaid and his fiction. It is sufficient here to highlight that although the progressive modernists were but one stream of Hindi's developing literary modernism, they were the dominant one, and this had a strong influence on the parameters around which Hindi modernism was imagined. Progressives were overtly Marxist in their ideology and having Premchand as a major contributor to the AIPWA and founder of the magazine *Haṁs* certainly assisted their cause.

That is not to deny that progressive modernists of the 1950s and 1960s changed the style and content of Hindi significantly, rather that the marriage in India between modernism and a focus on content-based literature and social purpose proved to have a retarding effect on modernism's natural extension: the avant-garde. Geeta Kapur, who has written on modernism in the art scene in India, has some relevant comments here:

> Modernism, seen as culminating in an international style and turning on a logic of 'art for art's sake', has not been crucial to India. Moreover, we have modernism without an avant-garde. Does that spell serious retardation? Indian artists have been buffered by a national and progressive state, so model and strategic action are perhaps less acutely positioned vis-a-vis each other; there is less dramatic confrontation than has been the case in Latin America, and indeed no declared avant-garde politics. (G. Kapur 2000, 287-88)

It is argued that Vaid's experimentation with more formal innovations demonstrated his deep dissatisfaction with the way modernism and experimentalism had been adapted in the Hindi literary environment. Geeta Kapur highlights issues with the experience of modernism and the retardation of the avant-garde in the Indian context which Vaid refers to in his fiction and non-fiction. Kapur confirms the idea that the progressive influence on the art scene meant that there was a reluctance to try more daring innovations:

> Something like a slogan of national in form, socialist in content is built into the programme. Thus while it is modern and in the Indian context also avantgarde, the movement represents itself as realist and progressive and tilts the definitional balance of Indian modernism. This obviously prevents it from trying out more daring formal innovations. (G. Kapur 2000, 302)

The purpose of the above section has been to provide a general overview of the most dominant approach to Hindi literature in the 1950s and 1960s, in terms of emergent experiments with modernism. Having established some of the ramifications of the confluence of progressivism and modernism in the Hindi literary milieu, the *nayī kahānī* or new short story movement is now discussed, as the new short story was one the key sites where authors experimented with the emergent modernism described above.

The Hindi Short Story and the Nayī Kahānī (New Short Story) Movement

The following outline of the Hindi short story and the *nayī kahānī* movement is important as Vaid was a prolific short story writer during the time in which *nayī kahānī* was at its peak. Although he never considered himself part of the *nayī kahānī* group of writers, as he was a fiercely independent writer, he rejected the groupism and infighting with which it became associated (and which will be discussed in Chapter Four). Despite considering his literature distinct from the *nayī kahāni* literature, a number of Vaid's short stories have appeared in *nayī kahānī* collections. For example, the third story in the Bimal trilogy of stories, *Ek Thā Bimal*, was first published in the magazine entitled *Naī Kahāniyāṁ* in 1962. Furthermore the authors who were his contemporaries as well as his friends and critics were firmly situated within the *nayī kahānī* movement, as it was the most significant literary trend of the era. It is also important for the current thesis as there is a strong link between the *nayī kahānī* and the development of modernist aesthetics in the Hindi literary context.

Starting in the early 1950s there was a spate of short story trends, most significantly the *nayī kahānī* (New Story) movement which focussed on depicting the feelings and emotions of the individual, which were deeply influenced by the socio-political atmosphere. In the *nāyī kahānī* trend unhealthy states of mind and themes of alienation and helplessness began to predominate. When authors began to realise that they did not have as much influence over the social situation as they

might have hoped, an aura of despair became an even more prominent feature of the Hindi short story than it had been in the 1950s, with the stories of the 1960s representing this despair to an even greater degree than the New Story of the 1950s. Dagmar Ansari (1974, 1976, 1978) has tracked certain characteristics of Hindi short story trends, and makes links between events in India's social and political history and the manner in which this climate is reflected in Hindi short story literature. Ansari highlights that as the social and political mood in India declined, there was a correlating deterioration of the states of mind of the characters presented in Hindi short stories. The irresolute hero frequently suffering from anxiety in difficult situations appears repeatedly in the New Short Story of the 1960s (Ansari 1974, 299).

Bodh Prakash has described the *nayī kahānī* trend as one which was enormously varied in form and content:

> The writer of the New Story could not be slotted in any category since this new kind of writing was extremely varied in terms of both content and form. The fear and suspicion in inter-personal relationships...the transience of human relationships and an open acknowledgement of the woman's physical and psychological needs...the individual's alienation from his entire family and society...and many other issues confronting the modern individual formed the subject matter of the *Nai Kahani*. (B. Prakash 2009, 33)

Later in the same chapter, Prakash discusses the emphasis on form which was 'a significant part of western aesthetic practice in the twentieth century' (B. Prakash 2009, 34). He continues by suggesting that there is little evidence of this concern with form in Hindi and Urdu fiction. This is important with regard to discussion of Vaid and his literature as he has expressed his deep dissatisfaction with formal innovation and experimentation in Hindi literature. While some of his fiction fits into a *nayī kahānī* framework, it is his relentless formal innovation and experimentation which distinguishes him from his contemporaries and for which he has been criticised. He has discussed how his constant experimentation with form has earnt him a reputation among some of his critics as being an overly cerebral writer (Interviewed on 26 May 2003). Such criticisms will be considered in detail in Chapter Four.

The advent and proliferation of the *nayī kahānī* trend, indicated a shift in the predominant form of Hindi short fiction of the 1950s and into the 1960s, and also heavily factionalised writers and critics. In the highly charged social and political environment, the *nayī kahānī* movement, arguably the most significant movement in Hindi literature in the post-independence period, also earned itself a reputation associated with infighting, cliques and authors who became their own critics. 'Sides were taken, cliques were formed and short story became something of discussion and enunciation rather than something that could be read and enjoyed' (Jossan 1981, 81). Criticism on the new short story was prolific, with 'perhaps more pages of criticism written on the short story than the total number of pages the stories under review could possibly fill' (Jossan 1981, 83). The *nayī kahānī* authors were also divided into two broad groups, those who were avowedly progressive and Marxist, and those who followed the 'art-for-art's sake' model.

At this pivotal moment in Hindi literature, when authors began experimenting with modernism in the postcolonial context, there were proscriptions which came from within the Hindi literary establishment regarding what was an appropriate way to engage with modernism in a uniquely and identifiably Indian manner. Carving out a uniquely Indian identity, free from the heavy hand of colonial influence, was a priority, so while there was acceptance of the short story (and the novel) as Western creations, there were also certain ways in which modernism was mined for creative inspiration in the Indian context.

The *nayī kahānī* movement attracted an enormous amount of attention from writers and critics, reaching a peak between 1962 and 1964, with the peak of excitement passing by around 1968 (Roadarmel 1969, 7). Authors such as Rajendra Yadav, Mannu Bhandari, Krishna Sobti, Srikant Joshi, Amar Kant, Markandeya, Kamaleshwar, Ramesh Bakshi, Bhism Sahni, Nirmal Varma and Mohan Rakesh are commonly associated with the *nayī kahānī* group and the development of a story 'different in technique and content from its earlier counterpart' (I. Pandey 1975, 190). The genre became particularly popular among writers as it was seen to comment more objectively on the social scene than poetry or the novel (Jossan 1981, 78) and tended to focus more on atmosphere than on plot and climax (Damsteegt 1997a, 56).

The role of prominent Hindi author Jai Shankar Prasad (1887-1937) in the development of two main approaches to the short story, cannot be left out of this discussion. Where Premchand was the father of social realism in the Hindi short story, Jai Shankar Prasad focussed on subjectivism and romantic realism, and was a prolific writer of poetry and prose in the *chāyāvād* (romantic) period and into the realistic period. The progressivist influence of Premchand combined with the subjectivist approach of Jai Shankar Prasad was critical in influencing the *nayī kahānī* period. This combination of realism and subjectivism which was prominent in the 1930s and 1940s created an increased focus on the individual's pyschological states.

A climate conducive to the short story was assisted in the 1950s by the rise of a number of critics who focused on this genre, in particular Namwar Singh who first coined the term *nayī kahānī*. The proliferation of *nayī kahānī* stories was also heavily influenced by the fact that the short story writers themselves became editors of collections of stories and literary journals which meant they could influence both the selection of stories for publication as well as criticism of the literature (Roadarmel 1969, 50).

Socially, the experience of the breaking of family and traditional values and a perception that they were not being replaced with new ones becomes a central issue for *nayī kahānī* authors (Cossio 1992, 109). Very early in *nayī kahānī* a split developed between writers dealing with rural situations (claimed in the tradition of Premchand and about 'decent people' and those dealing with urban situations. City writers were accused of spreading unhealthy ideas through stories about frustration, perversion and suffocation (Yadav in Roadarmel 1969, 54). The city as a theme used frequently in *nayī kahānī* writing is important for the current thesis as the texts analysed are all set in the urban metropolis. The city has been used both in modernist fiction and films (for example the films of Satyajit Ray[10]) to demonstrate the alienation experienced in the city, and the spaces within the city as providing no real sense of community. Vaid uses the city and the spaces within it, such as the coffeehouse, buses, temples and homes to express the alienation of

[10] Bose discusses the role of the metropolis in Satyajit Ray's films in 'Modernity, Globality, Sexuality, and the City: A Reading of Indian Cinema.' (Bose 2008) Her work will be utilised in Chapter Two.

the protagonist from his environment. This is a theme which is discussed in Chapter Two.

As the movement developed *nayī kahānī* writers placed increasing emphasis on helplessness and 'unhealthy' states of mind (Ansari, 1974:297), and crises of identity became a prominent feature. By the mid 1960s the Hindi short story is plagued by feelings of fear, emptiness and aimlessness and depressing mental states, with little hope and few, if any, suggestions as to how to bring about improvement. This presentation of utter hopelessness culminates in the *akahānī* (anti-story) movement which arose in the mid 1960s and continued into the 1970s. The events of the anti-story often take place at night and have a repulsive element, sometimes considered an absurd approach. Broadly speaking, where the characters in stories of the late *nayī kahānī* period had become disillusioned, the characters of the *akahānī* short story never had any illusions of happiness to start with. Ravindra Kaliya, Kamtanath, Himansu Joshi and Suresh Sinha are examples of authors some of whose stories broadly fit into the *akahānī* trend. 'The anti-story writers articulate only borrowed opinions and arguments. They have yet to prove that their movement is not a mere stunt and that they can write beyond iridescent mediocrity' (Vinay 1974, 236). Renowned author Rajendra Yadav when talking about the *akahānī* movement said, 'Just add a little horror, perception of death, alienation, boredom to your every feeling and become modern' (Yadav in Ansari 1976, 241). Contemporary with the anti-story was the *sacetan kahānī*, or conscious story, which is based on the premise that the inherent nature of man is activism and it is only through activism that meaning can be established. *Sacetan kahānī* literature is generally more satirical than cynical and authors such as Jnanranjan, Giriraj Kishor and Mahip Singh have been broadly associated with this genre (Ansari 1978, 320).

Having provided this outline of the postcolonial Hindi literary milieu, I now proceed to a brief biography of Vaid.

Biography of Dr Krishna Baldev Vaid

Krishna Baldev Vaid was born on 27 July, 1927 into a lower middle-class Hindu family in the predominantly Hindu and Sikh town of Dinga, Western Punjab, which is now part of Pakistan. His ancestral village was Dera Bakshian, near Rawalpindi

(Vaid in Bhalla, 2006:169). The language spoken in Dinga was a Panjabi close to that spoken in Lahore. The Punjabi of his parents was called Pothohari, the language of Rawalpindi and rural areas. His mother could converse only in Pothohari, his father in Pothohari, Urdu and the Punjabi of the Dinga area.

As a patwari—a government official who keeps accounts of agricultural lands and their revenue—Vaid's father, Ishar Das Vaid, had a lot of scope for illicit earnings. However Vaid describes how his father had 'some wild years—gambling and drinking— and was not dishonest enough to earn much' (email comm., 13 August 2004). The relationships Vaid had with his family were mixed. He was ambivalent toward his father, describing him as 'a gentle father but harsh husband' (ibid.). He had a bad relationship with his mother (Vaid in Bhalla 2006, 185), Ramrakhi Vaid, labelling her as 'inefficient and morbid and sad and ridiculous' (email comm., 13 August 2004).

About his childhood and family he says:

> I was ambivalent towards my father and mother. Perhaps because I was a sickly child, I was driven to brood and reflect on myself a lot more than I would have in a happier situation. A certain kind of morbidity was built into my consciousness because of my circumstances, both because of our poverty and the bad conjugal relationship between my parents. (Vaid in Bhalla 2006, 174)

Vaid's early schooling followed his father's transfers within the region, although the family returned to Dinga where Vaid completed his secondary education. The Sardar Hakim Singh High School which Vaid attended had a variety of Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Christian teachers. The languages of instruction were Punjabi and Urdu, Hindi being something Vaid taught himself at a later date. Vaid has fond memories of his high school days, except of course for the regular beatings the boys used to receive. His strong friendships at school provided him with some relief from his relatively unhappy childhood with his family. It was during his high school years that Vaid lost his faith in religion, citing a 'private argument with God' who he felt had failed him (Vaid 2004, 293). It was at this time that he made his first attempt at writing a story, the source of which was his 'agnostic mind.' (Vaid 2004, 293) It is also this first story which Vaid cites as 'a sort of seed-bed of my obsessive preoccupation with alienation and exile' (Vaid 2004, 294).

Vaid owes his early flair for languages to the headmaster of Sadar Hakim Singh High School, who was a Sikh man fluent in English, and also his Urdu and Persian teachers. The language medium of instruction at school was Urdu and Punjabi. At the age of just 16, Vaid moved to Lahore for two years to continue his studies in Government College (Bhalla 2006, 188), living for some time in a reasonably unhappy situation with his sister and her family (Vaid 2004, 288). After moving to Rawalpindi to do a Bachelor of Arts (which he received with Honours in 1946 from Punjab University), he returned to Lahore for his Master of Arts in English at Government College. Vaid would have completed this in 1948 but at the time of partition he joined a college in Delhi run by the East Punjab University for the benefit of refugee students. He received his Master of Arts there in 1949.

In the summer holidays of 1947 Vaid went home to Dinga where he experienced the extreme tensions and ensuing violence, including bloody riots, created by Viceroy Mountbatten's plans to partition the Provinces of Punjab and Bengal in the creation of Pakistan as a separate nation. This period, which is well-documented in a large number of fictional and scholarly works[11], had a massively traumatic effect on Vaid. Under Mountbatten's proposal, the small town of Dinga would soon become part of West Punjab in Pakistan, leaving Vaid and his family among over 10 million people moving from one country to another in an effort to escape the violence. About the time of the partition Vaid says:

> Our family was saved by a Muslim friend of my father's; he sheltered us and another Hindu couple in an abandoned hovel near his house where we remained while the killing and looting and burning went on all around us. He also gave us water and food and reassured us that we'd be safe. We were rescued from there by the army when it finally came and stopped the riot. (email comm., September 11 2011)

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[11] For examples see *Writing Partition: Aesthetics and Ideology in Hindi and Urdu Literature* (B. Prakash 2009); *Remembering Partition* (G. Pandey 2001); *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home* (Bhalla 2006); *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Butalia 2000); and "Literature and the Human Drama of the 1947 Partition" (Talbot 1999). There are many fictional pieces in Urdu and Hindi which deal with partition. Some examples include: Vaid's first novel *Uskā Bacpan* (1957) and its sequel *Guzrā Huā Zamānā*(1981); Sadat Hasan Manto's Urdu short story 'Toba Tek Singh' ([1955] n.d.); and Bhism Sahni's novel *Tamas* [1973] (1987). For a more comprehensive overview of partition fiction in Hindi and Urdu see (B. Prakash 2009) as listed above.

The Vaids were then taken to a camp for migrants in India (Vaid in Bhalla 2006, 189). The journey to the refugee camp at Jullundhar was by train and Vaid was aware of rumours of trains, just like the one he was on, full of corpses. It was on one of the many stops on the journey to the refugee camp that Vaid could no longer sustain the appearance of sanity and tore off his clothes (Vaid in Bhalla 2006, 190). About the enormous influence partition had on Vaid and the effect of creating a feeling of permanent dislocation Vaid says:

> The partition was an event that had a range of influences on me. It, of course, brought to an abrupt end all that I remember fondly about my friends and the town where I grew up. Its impact was so great that I'm still not aware of the variety of ways in which it changed my life. But, perhaps, the most important part of the partition for me personally was that it left in me a certain kind of fear and a permanent feeling of dislocation. A couple of years ago, a friend of mine surprised me when he remarked that my entire writing was marked by fear, and that I would, perhaps, stop writing once I ceased to be afraid. I was absolutely stunned by his perceptive observation. After he had said that, I realised how right he was. Now, I think, I can locate that sense of fear. I find that my characters are haunted by a certain sense of uncertainty, a certain feeling of not belonging. (Vaid in Bhalla 2006, 168)

It is important to note here that Vaid's linguistic history has played an important role in his fiction. The partition of India and the language issues which followed (mentioned earlier in this chapter and discussed in detail in Chapter Three) have influenced the reception of Vaid's work, which is known for drawing on an eclectic mix of Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi and Perso-Arabic vocabulary. As an author he refused to modify his language in order to conform to nationalist ideas about what style of Hindi best suited the post-independence period. The language choices Vaid made have not always been well-received, particularly in the period I focus on in this thesis. Multiple language vocabularies, a politically sensitive choice at the time, had an impact on his contemporaries' views of his work.

Arriving as refugees in Jullundhar, Vaid and his family were homeless and without any of their possessions, and had to do whatever they could to get by. Vaid got himself a job working for *Hindu*, a newspaper supportive of *Rāṣṭriya*

Swayaṁsevak Saṅg (RSS)[12], a leading nationalist organisation (Vaid in Bhalla 2006, 190).

After completing his Master's degree in Delhi, Vaid spent the years between 1950 and 1958 as a lecturer in English at Hans Raj College in Delhi University, which was also the period in which he was married (December 1952) and started a family. At this time he deferred his application to pursue a PhD in the United States until 1958. In 1957, Vaid published his first novel, *Uskā Bacpan* (*Steps in Darkness*)[13]. A largely autobiographical piece, the novel focuses on the experiences of a young boy in pre-Partition Punjab, and has received the most critical acclaim and attention of all of Vaid's fiction. It has been produced as a play and performed at the National School of Drama in New Delhi as part of the National School of Drama's (NSD) 5th National Theatre Festival in 2003, and performed again in 2004 in Mumbai.

In 1958 Vaid was awarded a Fullbright fellowship to do a PhD at Harvard University. Vaid took study leave from his job at Delhi University and completed the PhD in 1961. During his PhD he studied courses in American literature, romantic literature, Dryden and Pope, metaphysical poetry and creative writing. His revised PhD thesis was published in 1964 by Harvard University Press under the title *Technique in the Tales of Henry James*.

Vaid returned to Hans Raj College in 1961 and moved to Punjab University in 1962. He spent the years 1962-1966 as a Reader in English at Punjab University, Chandigarh. During this time he taught courses in the modern novel (mostly British). According to first publication dates, it is during this period in Chandigarh that Vaid published all three short stories of the Bimal trilogy which are central to this thesis.

In 1966 Vaid was offered a position as Professor of English at the State University of New York, Potsdam, and after moving to America for the job, continued teaching literature courses of his choice. Subjects on which he taught included Henry James, Samuel Beckett, the avant garde novel (French mostly via English translation), love and death in the American novel, the short story and

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[12] I referred to the RSS earlier in this chapter with regard to Hindu nationalism. The RSS is a Hindu nationalist organisation, which is part of the *Sangh Parivar*.
[13] For a full list of Vaid's publications please see Appendix.

existentialism. He always included a course on creative writing. Vaid also taught as a visiting professor at Brandeis University in Massachusetts for a year during this time. In the period in which Vaid taught in the United States he published a large volume of literature. The novella *Us ke Bayān* ([1974] 1999b) which I use in the analysis in the following chapters was written in this period. *Bimal urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ* was finally published in 1974; *Nasrīn* followed in 1975; *Dūsrā Na Koī* in 1978; *Dard lā Davā* in 1980, and *Guzrā Huā Zamānā* in 1981. During this period as a lecturer Vaid also published a large number of short story collections: *Bīc kā darvāzā* (1962); *Merā Duśman* (1966); *Dūsre Kināre Se* (1970), *Veh aur Meṁ* (1970); *Lāpatā aur Anya Kahāniyāṁ* (1973) and *Merī Priyā Kahāniyāṁ* (1978).

Regarding his choice to continue writing in Hindi, despite long absences from India Vaid says:

> I think I took an early decision that I'd continue to write in Hindi no matter what, a decision I do not regret. I also opted out of the rat race for a career as a professor.... The long distance from the Hindi scene enriched my style and my obsession with formal innovations and enabled me to go deeper in my exhilic preoccupations that had been engendered in my early childhood experiences. (email comm., 13 August 2004)

In 1983, Vaid took two years leave in anticipation of early retirement in 1985. About his career in America Vaid has said: 'Even though I did reasonably well as a teacher, my heart was never in it entirely' (email comm., 13 August 2004). The dearth of critical material written by Vaid during this period correlates with his personal admission; however this lack of critical material is balanced by his large number of Hindi fiction publications, for which the University gave him credit. Importantly of course, Vaid's academic career bank-rolled his career as a writer of experimental Hindi fiction, which could not in itself provide enough earnings for a family of five to live off comfortably.

After retiring from his academic career in the United States, Vaid spent the years between 1985 and 1989 as a writer-in-residence in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The Nirala Srijanpeeth literary Chair was one of several chairs which formed part of the Bharat Bhavan arts centre set up by poet, critic and ex Madhya Pradesh government official Ashok Vajpeyi. In his retirement, Vaid was based in New Delhi,

with frequent trips abroad, mostly to the United States to visit his three daughters who reside permanently there. In this period of his retirement as an academic Vaid published prolifically. The novels he produced in this period were: *Kalā Kolāj* (1989); *Nar-Nārī* (1996) and *Māyā Lok* (1999). He also produced many more short story collections: *Khamośī* (1986); *Alāp* (1986); *Pratinidhī Kahāniyāṁ* (1990); *Līlā aur Anya Kahāniyāṁ* (1993); *Carcit Kahāniyāṁ* (1995); *Pitā kī Parchaiyāṁ* (1997), *Das Pratinidhi Kahāniyaṁ* (1997) and his collected works in two volumes *Sampūrṇ Kahāniyāṁ* (1999).

In the 1990s he also translated a number of literary pieces into Hindi: Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* published in Hindi as *Goḍo kè Intazār Meṁ aur Ākhirī Khel* (1999); Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* appearing in Hindi as *Alis Ajūbon kī Duniyā Meṁ* (1990); and Jean Racine's *Phaedra, Feḍrā* (1990).

In the last 10 years he has produced five plays: *Bhūk Āg Hai* (1998), *Hamārī Buṛhiyā* (2000), *Savāl aur Svāpnā* (2001), *Parivār Akhāṛa* (2002), *Monālizā kī Muskān* (2003) and *Kahte Haiṁ Jisko Pyār* (2004) as well as two short story collections *Bodhisattva ki Bīvī* (2001) and *Badcalan Bīviyoṁ kā Dvīp* (2002). He also published the novel *Ek Naukrānī kī Ḍāyrī* (2000) and the collection of selected works entitled *Saṃśay ke Sāye: Kṛṣṇ Baldev Vaid Sañcayan* (2007)[14].

Non-fiction publications from this most recent period include: *Sobtī-Vaid Saṃvād* (2007)[15], *Khvāb hai Dīvāne Kā* (*Pravās Ḍāyrī*) (2005)[16], *Śam'a har rang Meṁ* (2007)[17]; *Śikast kī Āvāz* (2006)[18]; and *Javāb Nahīṁ: Sākṣātkār aur Ātmsakṣātkār* (2002)[19].

Vaid has also translated much of his fiction into English: *Uska Bacpan* (*Steps in Darkness,* 1994), *Bimal Urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ* (*Bimal in Bog,* 1972 and 2002) and *Dūsrā Na Koī* (*Dying Alone,* 1992). *Guzrā huā zamānā* (*The Broken Mirror,* 1994) has been translated by Charles Sparrows, and *Ek Naukrānī kī Diary* (*The Diary of a Maidservant,* 2007) by Sagaree Sengupta. Vaid has also translated

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[14] This is a selection of works by Vaid edited by Ashok Vajpayi and Udayan Vajpayi.
[15] Conversations between Krishna Sobti and Vaid.
[16] Vaid's diary entries from the period 1968-1983.
[17] Vaid's diary entries 1954-1958 and 1983-1990.
[18] A compilation of non-ficiton articles written by Vaid on Hindi fiction and criticism.
[19] A selection of interviews with Vaid and self-interviews, where he discusses his fiction, influences on his fiction and critical responses to his work.

many of his short stories into English, which have appeared in periodicals and collections such as *Silence and Other Stories* (1972). His literature has been translated into many languages including Bengali, Urdu, Gujarati, Tamil, Marathi, German, Italian, Spanish, French, Norwegian, Swedish and Polish.

Vaid's literature has appeared in Hindi and English in a number of journals and literary magazines such as *The Little Magazine, Hindi: Language Discourse and Writing, Debonair, Indian Literature* (the Sahitya Akademi's bi-Monthly Journal), *The Book Review* and *Chicago Review.* His short fiction has also appeared in a number of collections of Hindi short stories; for example, *Dharmyug* (1964); Rājendra Yādav's collection *Ek Duniyā Samānāntar* (1993); Inranāth Madān's collection *Kahānī aur Kahānī* (1966); and Bhism Sahni's collection *Hindī Kahānī Saṅgrah* . Reviews about his work and articles he has written have appeared in *Pūrvgrah* (1985); *Kalā-Prayojan* (1998); and *Madhumatī* (1999).

In February 2010, Vaid and his wife Champa decided to spend all of their time in the United States (based in College Station, Texas) so they could be near their children. Vaid continues to publish and is actively involved with literary activities and festivals around the world.

In the above chapter critical background material has been provided for the analysis that follows in Chapters Two to Four. Significant events in India's postcolonial social and political sphere and a sketch of the development of Hindi fiction in the lead up to independence and the post independence period (up until the early 1970s) has been provided. This is important as it covers the period in which Vaid wrote the Bimal trilogy of stories and *Uske Bayān* which are central to the analysis in the following chapter. The information provided in this chapter is critical in fully understanding the context of Vaid's fiction and the criticism he has received.

Chapter Two: Intimacy and Solitude in a Loveless City

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, one of the charges against Vaid's fiction is that it is 'pornographic', 'vulgar', and demonstrates an obsession with sex. This chapter discusses some examples of how Vaid uses sex and sexual references in his fiction, both explicitly and implicitly, in an exploration of features of postcolonial masculinities and the crises of modernity they can be seen to represent. Rather than demonstrating an obsession with sex, or a vulgarized style of literature, it is suggested that they provide insights into the way the male characters in Vaid's fiction negotiate their own masculinity and ideas regarding 'modern women' and the postcolonial metropolis as an alienating space.

One of the comments made by critic Jaidev with regard to Vaid's fiction is as follows:

> Since according to him [Vaid], anything goes in the West, since there is no ban there on carnivalesque promiscuity, a similar liberation will solve all Indian problems. (Jaidev 1993, 139-140)

The idea that Vaid's fiction promotes a Western style of promiscuity which is inappropriate in the Indian context will be problematised in the analysis that follows through a focus on what Vaid's literature actually says about the crises faced by the male characters. The historical backdrop for this discussion draws on research by a number of scholars who have discussed Indian masculinities. The works of Derné (2000a, 2000b), Alter (1994) and Srivastava (2007) have been particularly useful in terms of informing discussion on Indian masculinities, as also Chatterjee's (1993) formulation on how representations of womanhood became an essential part of asserting a uniquely (and morally superior) national agenda. The coming together of a politics of sexual potency and a politics of celibacy in the context of Indian nationalism (Derné 2000a) is a significant backdrop the discussion follows since the themes of 'strong' sexually potent masculinity and the politics of celibacy both have incarnations in Vaid's literature.

This chapter first considers an ambivalent style of masculinity embodied by Bimal, the main character of the trilogy of stories. Bimal is characterized as uncertain, anxious and uncomfortable and part of this characterization juxtaposes Bimal's masturbation against 'traditional' notions of masculinity such as

brahmcarya. This is followed by a discussion of mimicry and the sexualisation of literary discourse in terms of what it says about the literary milieu and anxieties of the time. Ultimately Bimal is presented as an 'incurable' case, beleaguered by tradition and unable to find meaning in any of the existing discourse.

Having established Bimal's uncertainties about his own masculinity, the analysis then shifts to a consideration of the more 'macho' style of masculinity displayed by Bimal's colleagues. The 'macho' world is one which Bimal also inhabits but which causes him to reflect upon the absence of meaningful relationships in the metropolis. The issues addressed in the section on 'macho' masculinity include: the way macho discourse is constructed in the texts; the negotiation of 'modern' women in terms of stereotypes regarding mothers, devis (virtuous women/goddesses) and promiscuous women; and an example of the way the rape of a woman (the stereotypical Mother India) is included in the literature.

In the final section of this chapter, the metropolis is examined as the setting in which so-called transgressive sexual acts occur. The city is established as a site of alienation and anonymity, which further confirms Bimal as an 'outsider', and reflects deeper issues in terms of alienation and exile which permeate Vaid's literature.

A key writing style of Vaid in many of the examples discussed is the use of connotation and implicit references in confronting ways. In his article 'The Erotics of Moonlight and other Connotations in Modern Hindi Literature', Damsteegt (2001) chooses Vaid's short stories *Khamośī* (1957) and *Alāp* (1972) to make a number of points regarding connotation in modern Hindi texts. Damsteegt makes the point that Vaid uses connotations in untraditional ways, and in striking contexts which 'may well shock his reader'. He observes that 'in terms of reception theory, we are dealing here with a breach of the literary text code, and at least for a number of readers with a clash between the text's socio-cultural code and that of the reader' (Damsteegt 2001, 735). In the following analysis, there are many examples where such a clash between the text's socio-cultural code and the reader's can be seen. This chapter explores some of the ways Vaid has created such clashes and what they represent in terms of a deep engagement with socio-political issues of the time.

Ambivalent masculinity and the character Bimal

Characterization of a postcolonial anti-hero

Samādhi, Bimal, Kāfī Hāus aur Buniyādī Savāl[20], and *Ek Thā Bimal*, all have Bimal as the central character. There are many places in the texts where Bimal is characterized, either explicitly or implicitly, as someone who is anxious, uncertain and plagued by fundamental questions. His character also emerges as that of an 'outsider', and alienated from both physical space and his contemporaries. In the following paragraphs text which supports this characterization, and supports the discussion that follows regarding the ambivalent style of masculinity Bimal represents are provided. There is irony in Bimal's name, Bimal being a Sanskrit word meaning 'stainless.' Vaid's transcreation of the novel *Bimal, urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ* is entitled *Bimal in Bog*, clearly playing on the words Bimal (stainless) and bog.

The first two paragraphs of *BCFQ* provide rich material regarding how Bimal is characterized by uncertainty and an inability to make decisions:

> A concealed Bimal is standing by the bicycle stand looking towards the coffee house as if standing like an embarrassed young man outside a student hostel waiting for his lover (or sister).
>
> Bimal has three sisters (about whose marriages his mother and father argue about with each other, and sometimes Bimal,) there is no counting the number of distant cousins (and among them many are married), and this fact really gets at Bimal's mother, but Bimal hasn't managed to get even one girlfriend yet.
>
> Poor Bimal!
>
> But this time the reason for Bimal's misfortune wasn't his girlfriend (or lack thereof). This time he is totally caught up in another dilemma altogether. He is thinking whether or not he should go into the coffee house. The question is very basic, however nearly every evening Bimal has to encounter with this dilemma and by the time he reaches the cycle stand he stops if not for hours, then certainly for minutes, and the cycle stand Malik (or perhaps the lackey of the Malik) is very agitated by this habit of his because Bimal doesn't just stand there, but several times he has become lost in thoughts and starts to walk up and down and once or twice in continuously walking up and down he has totally knocked down a whole row of bicycles.
>
> Needless to say Bimal is definitely unconcerned by the distress of the Malik (or perhaps his lackey) of the cycle stand, because he has no time outside his own problems.
>
> Poor and perplexed Bimal!
>
> Now is not the time to go into all of Bimal's problems.

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[20] *Bimal, Kāfī House aur Buniyādi Savāl* or, Bimal, the Coffeehouse and the Fundamental Questions, is referred to in the analysis as BCFQ.

> So he would come there every day, come and stop, stop and stay stopped and would keep looking intently towards the coffeehouse (or towards his own feet), it seems very foolish to him, after all, what else can he do? That is, whatever he does, he accepts that there is no cure for foolishness.
>
> Incurable Bimal! (Vaid 1999a, 358)

This excerpt provides a picture of Bimal as indecisive, physically restless, unfortunate, unable to get a girlfriend, and so preoccupied with his own concerns that he is oblivious to the circumstances around him. It is also significant that the decision as to whether or not to enter the coffeehouse causes him such distress. The experiences he has inside the coffeehouse are described in later passages as provoking discomfort and only serve to worsen his malaise. The manner of using specific adjectives to explicitly characterize Bimal, for example, 'poor and perplexed Bimal', and 'incurable Bimal', is repeated throughout the story. The following are also used in various places throughout the text:

> *Becārā aur pareśān Bimal*
>
> Poor and perplexed Bimal. (Vaid 1999a, 358)
>
> *Bujhā huā Bimal*
>
> Extinguished/depressed Bimal (Vaid 1999a, 360)
>
> *Lājavāb Bimal!*
>
> Without answers/peerless Bimal (Vaid 1999a, 361)
>
> *Jhāṛiyoṁ meṁ phaṁsā huā (chintāgrast) Bimal*
>
> Entangled in the bushes (consumed by anxieties) Bimal (Vaid 1999a, 361)
>
> *Khojī*[21] *Bimal*
>
> Searching Bimal. (Vaid 1999a, 364)

Vaid characterises Bimal as endlessly grappling with 'fundamental questions', which reduce him to a state of helplessness that characterises his persona and his being. The fundamental questions are insoluble, and reflect the deep sense of alienation and search for meaning which is a recurring theme in Vaid's fiction. Annie Montaut (2003, 8) has discussed indecision as a central thematic and stylistic feature in Vaid's novel *Dūsrā Na Koī*, and the idea of the central character of that novel as a 'non-initiator', a 'non-achiever', and 'a solitary who wishes to cut himself from any contacts and lacks the requirements for being a hero.' She also points to the 'fundamental issues' in terms of an articulation of a 'pattern of hesitation and uncertainty'. The idea of Bimal as an 'exile', and someone who is

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[21] It should be noted here that this is a play on words, and *khojī* here can also have connotations of being itchy or 'having the itch.' I explore this in greater detail later in this chapter.

eternally homeless, which has as historical backdrop the massive disruption of the Partition and Bimal (and many of his colleagues) as refugees in the city of Delhi, is explored in Vaid's stories. The idea that Bimal is plagued by despair and experiences 'never-ending grieving over the unnameable thing, pointing to the un-localizable un-healable pain' (Montaut 2003, 10) can be read as a deep engagement with the phases of alienation and exile which are a significant themes in Vaid's fiction. Montaut has described the way Vaid articulates the 'fundamental questions' through various literary styles:

> As stated from the very beginning of *Bimal urf Jāeṁ to Jāeṁ Kahāṁ*, what is at stake for the author in literary language is how to grasp the always elusive "fundamental questions" of the human mind. And K.B. Vaid does so by means of seemingly word-plays, negative syntax (counter assertions, de-assertions, re-assertions in the mood of probability and doubt), humour, derision, all such devices bound to maintain open all contradictory alternatives without any *Aufhebung* of the contradictions.(Montaut 2010, 120)

In the stories under analysis in this thesis, Vaid invokes the 'fundamental questions' through grappling with how best to meaningfully engage with modernity and how India might negotiate its relationship with the West and Western 'influence.' These ideas will be explored, at different points in this thesis. The underlying themes of alienation and exile, with the historical backdrop of the violence of Partition haunt Vaid's texts, as he constantly plays with language and existential crisis in an exploration of human pain and suffering.

Masturbation and a deconstruction of 'traditional' masculinity

One of the most confronting aspects of Vaid's texts is his use of auto-eroticism. His texts provide examples, both of direct reference to masturbation or implicit references, where the reader observes a double-meaning implied in the text. In this section academic debates around Gandhian male sexuality are considered, along with Srivastava's recent discussions regarding the 'wide variety of discourses that gather around sexuality and masculinity that pay little heed to the supposedly dominant themes of Indian (or Hindu) sexuality and masculinity' (Srivastava 2007, 121). The main argument of this section is that rather than demonstrating 'perversity', the literature demonstrates a deep exploration of Bimal's masculinity,

and his constant efforts at finding a resolution to his crisis, at the same time as being profoundly disillusioned by 'traditional' discourses of masculinity.

The following excerpt is from the first few pages of *Samādhi* and provides a number of examples which demonstrate how Vaid mixes 'traditional' ideas of masculinity (e.g. the celibacy model) with 'transgressive' sexual acts such as masturbation in the process of trying to achieve the higher state of *samādhi*:

> Today I won't go anywhere, nowhere at all.
>
> With a distorted face, Bimal was staring fixedly at the papers fallen on the table for quite some time. The restless one is never far from going somewhere (or not going somewhere), meeting with someone or not meeting with şomeone), restlessly wandering with head hung down (or restlessly tossing and turning throughout the night, crying (or humming a tune), laughing (or making someone laugh or whinnying). There is only one remedy to remove this restless one—grab the bitch , if possible by her cunt or her ponytail and express it in art.
>
> Bimal suddenly smiled gently.
>
> He started to smile gently and he said: this is love.
>
> While painstakingly pressing down on his quivering lips, Bimal started staring at the papers lying on the table again and again his face became contorted.
>
> Keep going. Whatever came to his mind, but today I have sat, with the firm resolve of Bhisma. Today I will not give in to moving from here. I will read, I will write (that is to say I will make great efforts). They say that you don't get anything without doing *tapasya*. (that is to say, whatever happens is equal to nothing). They're definitely right.
>
> Ascetic practice, yoga practice, worship[22], intense despair (like heavy clouds) deep realisation, but above all of this is thick moustaches.
>
> Bimal didn't smile now, on the contrary he trembled somewhat just imagining the wrath of his fathers' moustaches dance. Having got up I shall close the door (today is Sunday), I'm afraid that if father enters the room wearing a veneer of a smile on his face and carrying a newspaper in one hand and glasses in the other then it will be very hard to get rid of him, but really the whole practice will be ruined because as soon as he enters he'll start ranting and will make himself crazy by showing over and over the advertisements for jobs which have appeared in the newspaper. Bimal became flustered and got up. He closed the door from inside and took a deep breath. Returning towards the table his glance (unfortunately) stopped on rows of books decorating the bookshelf and he immediately paused. 'Bimal what great scriptures you have got.' Dying with shame, Bimal's eyes began to fix on the ground and one hand fell foul with the original scripture (*ādigranth*).
>
> 'Send for a palmful of water (or get it yourself) and go and drown in it!'
>
> While arriving at the desk Bimal looked towards the bookshelf with a side glance, became dejected and fell down into the chair then sitting at the table he started staring fixedly towards the pile of blank papers. Then suddenly he picked up the

---

[22] In the Hindi original these are highlySanskritic words, heavily laden with philosophical meanings. The words in the original are: *tapasya, sādhanā* and *ārādhanā*. The significance of these words in the context will be discussed in the analysis that follows.

pen and bent down. In a short time he'd filled a whole page but as soon as he had done this Bimal might have got disgraced.

"Think! Water! Hoe! Weed! Then with great difficulty perhaps something will grow.

Barren land, bushes and shrubs!

Don't speak rubbish. Write rubbish and...(tear it up)!

Bimal suddenly tore up everything he had written up until now. The sound of the ripping gradually became lost while splitting the stillness of the room and the bits of paper were scattered on the floor. Bimal felt as if someone might have shown his *tapasya* to be worthless.

Bimal what are you doing?

I'm watching the end of my work.

Look. Watch carefully.

Throwing his pen on the floor, Bimal pulled his forehead tight with both hands. A few very small fish began skipping in the sea of flowing boredom behind the skin of (his) forehead. Bimal's thinking began the futile undertaking of catching those fish/as futile as pulling a chick.

Bimal, what is going on in your head?

Maybe reflections of the imagination are being stirred. Bimal's clutch loosened and he took some long deep breaths.

Bimal what is this you are doing?

Deep breathing![23]

And now?

Adigranther...[masturbating]

A humbled feeling came over Bimal then a smirk on his lips and it seemed to him as if rows of grief might have been laid out on the paper lying on the table in front of him.

When he saw this, his teeth began to cut a smile. The wretched intimacy of the smile cut his lower lip too. While sucking his split lip Bimal felt as if he were sucking the blood out of his own smile.

Bimal heaved a heavy sigh and got up and wobbled over and stood in front of the mirror.

Bimal why are you crying? Aren't you able to write a story, or is it just your [ugly] appearance?

Yes it's both of those things.

Bimal you are very frank.

Yes, it is my misfortune.

There was something starting to smoulder in Bimal's eyes.

What are you doing standing there Bimal?

Yes, I'm just wasting my time.

Then sit in the chair and do it.

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[23] The word used is *prāṇāyām* which is another example of a highly culturally specific reference, referring to yogic breathing practice. This will also be discussed in the following analysis.

> Whatever is your command.
>
> Bimal silently sat in the chair.
>
> He didn't look towards the bookshelf this time or he didn't even glance that way. He picked up his pen (the nib had become somewhat bent) and was stooped over the table...
>
> Will you listen to Bimal's story?
>
> We will definitely listen Ramu, we will definitely listen.
>
> Yes brother, everyone should listen attentively and should take full advantage of it especially those who are short story writers themselves...one two three!!! (Vaid 1999a, 341-43)

In the following paragraphs, I look at some of the key features of this passage in detail, analysing the context, as well as the Hindi original text to gain a fuller understanding of how examples of masturbation can be seen to represent Bimal as deeply engaged and troubled by his own traditions. Bimal is a restless (*bekāli*), writer, struggling with his inability to get words on the page. He stares constantly, has flashbacks of his father and is unable to set aside his memories and paralysis in the interests of writing something. He tells us that he will not leave the room until he has written something. After a relatively small flashback about his father he returns to his table and is physically arrested by the rows of books facing him. The first overt reference to masturbation in the story is confronting:

> *Bimal, baṛe baṛe granth rakhe hue haiṁ? sharm ke mare bimal kī āṁkeṁ jamīn meṁ gaṛne lagīm aur us kā ek hath ādi granth se ulajh gayā*
>
> 'Bimal, what great scriptures you have got'. Dying with shame, Bimal's eyes began to fix on the ground and one hand fell foul with the original scripture. (Vaid 1999a, 342)

In this first instance, we see Vaid use a dramatic play on words with *granth*, scriptures, the Adigranth, Sikhism's holiest book, and reference to one hand falling foul with the original scripture (Adigranth literally meaning *ādi* [first/original]+ *granth* [book/ scripture], that is, his penis. This is a classic Vaid example, whereby he introduces the topic of masturbation, first of all by referring to rows of scriptures (which could be any books or scriptures), then narrowing the reader's focus to refer specifically to the Adigranth (implying religious context), and then destroying the sanctity of the reference by referring to Bimal as holding on to what he considers his original scripture. The reference leaving the reader in no doubt that he is now talking about holding his penis.

This double meaning of referring both to the Adigranth as the Sikh scripture, but also as his penis, is confirmed and made more explicitly later on the same page:

> *Bimal kī jakaṛ kuch ḍhīlī ho gayī aur vah lambī lambī sāṁs lene lagā.*
> *'Bimal, yah kyā kar rahe ho?'*
> *'prāṇāyām!'*
> *'aur ab?'*
> *ādigranther...*
> Bimal's clutch loosened and he took some long deep breaths.
> 'Bimal, what is this you are doing?'
> Deep breathing!
> 'And now?'
> Adigranther...[masturbating] (Vaid 1999a, 342)

The reader has now confirmed that the first reference to the Adigranth was indeed phallic, as when asked what he is doing Bimal replies by referring to deep breathing prior to ejaculation, and when asked 'and now?', replies: Adigranther, meaning masturbating. Vaid uses an extension of his previous reference to the *granth* (scriptures) and Adigranth (his penis), completing the trio of references by creating his own term Adigranther to refer to masturbation. The concept of *prāṇāyām* and what it indicates will be discussed in later paragraphs, but firstly some additional textual details to facilitate more comprehensive discussion.

> *'Bimal yahāṁ khaṛe kyā kar rahe ho?'*
> *'Jī, jhakh mār rahā hūṁ.'*
> *'kursī meṁ baiṭhkar māro.'*
> What are you doing standing there Bimal?
> Yes, I'm just wasting my time.
> Then sit in the chair and do it. (Vaid 1999a, 343)

When asked what he is doing just standing there, Bimal replies that he is just wasting his time; however once again this simple sentence can be read two ways. Firstly it can simply refer to time wasting, but secondly can also be read as masturbating. The reader suspects the reference, and then has it confirmed with the line, 'then sit in the chair and do it.'

Later in the same story, the references continue:

phir usne dāṁt pīskar sar ko zor se ek jhaṭkā diyā. sar kisī jhunjhune kī tarah baj uṭhā aur usmeṁ paṛī kaṅkariyāṁ ek dūsrī meṁ gaḍḍmaḍḍ ho gayīṁ (Vaid 1999a, 347).

Then he clenched his teeth and gave his head a good jerk. His head sounded like a rattle and the pebbles within that toy became disorderly.

This analogy with a child's toy is continued and becomes more obviously a reference to masturbation on page 348:

Bimal kyā kar rahe ho?

jhunjhune meṁ paṛī kaṅkariyāṁ kāgaz par bikher rahā hūṁ

Bimal, what are you doing?

I am scattering the small pebbles in the rattle onto paper. (Vaid 1999a, 348)

In these two instances we find reference to *jhunjhunā*, which, in its standard form is simply a masculine noun meaning 'a child's rattle (McGregor 1993, 395)'. However in Hindi slang the word *jhunjhunā* could mean penis. Therefore, we can see in the above excerpts Vaid referring to the pebbles in the rattle being scattered onto paper is also as an implicit reference to ejaculating onto the paper. This is an inference, rather than an explicit reference, but the connotations to masturbation are certainly present.

As the excerpts above demonstrate, the references to masturbation appear in a very complex context. For example, the first reference to masturbation in the text is preceded by Bimal's reflections on his father. This is one of many instances in the texts where Bimal reflects on his father in a negative way. The idea of tradition and the father figure as being an enormous burden on Bimal is expanded in the story *Ek Thā Bimal*, and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. In this example the memory of his parents repeatedly makes Bimal anxious, the father's ranting in this context is deemed to have a deleterious effect on Bimal's ability to focus on his writing. It is shortly after this memory of his father that the reference to the books on the shelves occurs and the references to masturbation. Both of these instances create a feeling of Bimal as beleaguered by tradition. The father and the sight of the rows of important texts both have a paralysing effect on Bimal's ability to write anything. This representation of his forebears (both physical and literary) is starkly contrasted, in a humorous way, by his masturbation.

There are, intermingled with references to masturbation, a number of highly specific Sanskrit words which refer to the yogic tradition. This creates a

juxtaposition between the celibacy model of *brahmcarya* and the semen-loss anxieties of the Gandhian model, and its opposite, that is masturbation and ejaculation.

Joseph Alter in his article entitled, 'Celibacy, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Gender into Nationalism in North India' discusses how *brahmcarya* was used in terms of part of nationalist discourse in establishing a model of manhood which was strategically opposed to Western models:

> *brahmacharya* developed as a strategic concept opposed to Westernization. More specifically, it was developed as the moral/physical alternative to various forms of postcolonial desire—both gross and subtle—which were thought to directly afflict the body and undermine strength and integrity. (J. Alter 1994, 49)

Alter also includes a list of common symptoms cited in books on *brahmcarya* which are said to afflict a person suffering from semen-loss. Among other things such a person might be identified by the following symptoms:

> Walks with head bowed and eyes averted...is irritable and aggressive...he never finishes the work he starts and prefers to be alone; he is restless...he drinks, smokes and takes drugs...he suffers from memory loss, is depressed and dull witted; his unconscious mind is unstable, and he is plagued by conflicting thoughts, mental anguish and dementia. (J. Alter 1994, 53)

We can see in the text, that according to the *bramacarya* model of semen-loss anxiety, Bimal meets most of the characteristics of a person who has not controlled his seminal output. As well, there is the implicit characterization of Bimal as plagued by doubt, paralysed by conflicting thoughts and generally someone unable to finish the work he starts. In terms of the highly specific Sanskrit words used in the text which make references to the *brahmcarya* model of masculinity more explicit, the words *tapasya* (ascetic practice) *sādhanā* (yoga practice) and *ārādhanā* (worship) are all significant. Each of these aspects of yogic practice assists the practitioner in getting closer to the ultimate goal of *samādhi* (profound meditation), the title of the story. The act of deep breathing prior to ejaculation being referred to as *prāṇāyām* (yogic breathing) has the effect of rupturing the spiritual meaning of the word, and placing it in a highly sexualized context.

Prāṇāyām refers to the yogic breathing practices which 'stimulate and increase the vital energy, ultimately bringing about perfect control over the flow of *prāṇa*[24] within the body' (Saraswati 1983, 248). The effect of *prāṇāyām* is to 'induce physical and mental stability' (Saraswati 1983, 248).

In these instances Vaid skilfully weaves traditional Indian notions of health and wellbeing, being achieved through yogic practice together with its flip-side-masturbation resulting in 'semen-loss'. Here I would suggest that Vaid problematizes the premise of 'Gandhian' sexuality, through direct reference to masturbation. The title of the first story is of course, *Samādhi*, the state of profound meditation accomplished by experienced yogis. This can be seens as an example of Vaid shocking the reader, and making 'the reader aware of new viewpoints outside the beaten track of ordinary associations and cognitivepatterns', which Montaut (2010, 120-121) has discussed.

The ways in which Vaid uses sarcasm and wit to juxtapose traditional Hindu ideas about virility and good health with its putative opposite, that is, semen-loss via masturbation are further developed in the following excerpt from BCFQ:

> Read the religious scriptures, right there you will find solutions to all problems, and if not, then your whole life will pass just reading them. And after all, what is the most basic question? Isn't it just boredom? And there are just two methods of keeping away boredom. One is this that every day, morning and night, walk up and down on the grass for two hours, just like your father does, and before your father, his father used to do it, a son should get up every day at first light and first touch his mother's and father's feet, then do his ablutions and then go on a seven-mile walk: from this the mind remains peaceful, and then after returning from the walk he should pray to the gods, son, son...
>
> Bimal becomes panicky [about the stereotypes and traditions] and gives his head a jerk. While thinking when sometimes he remembers his father (or his mother), then apart from jerking his head (and totally forgetting everything) he can't do anything else, yes, if he might be alone then sometimes (after jerking) he grabs his head and goes and sits down. From this mischief of his it is natural that this doubt arises that he still can't free himself from his mother and father. But doubt is not necessary, he knows that he will not get this liberation in this lifetime.
>
> Beleaguered by his mother and father Bimal! (Vaid 1999a, 365-66)

In the above example we see Vaid create an image of what a 'good' young boy or man should do, in-keeping with the *āśramas* of the Hindu system. The *āśramas* refer to the four stages of life, and 'a paradigm of how the high-caste man should live' (Flood 1996, 62).

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[24] The vital force closely related to the breath but not exactly the same as it.

> The four stages are: that of the celibate student (*brahmacārya*), householder (*gṛhastha*), hermit or forest dweller (*vanaprastha*), and renouncer (*samnyāsa*). (Flood 1996, 62)

In Vaid's text the religious scriptures which support *āśrama* system are referred to sarcastically in terms of providing solutions to all problems, and as unhelpful and not useful in terms of relieving Bimal's doubt. Moreover, the thought of the stereotypes and traditions he invokes make him panicky.

The *brahmacari* model Vaid refers to in this excerpt has been aptly described by Alter:

> Like his classical forebear, the modern *brahmachari* is, first and foremost, celibate, but to maintain absolute control over his sexual desire his discipline mandates that he must control all of his senses by means of a rigid and carefully regimented program of diet, exercise, and rest. Moreover, control of the senses entails careful management of a wide array of daily activities, including what and how to read, where and how to sleep, and what to wear, among many other things. (J. Alter 1994, 48)

Bimal abhors the idea that one should slavishly follow what his father and his grandfather before him have done in order to settle the mind and alleviate the symptoms of existential crisis. This reflects a crisis of modernity: Bimal abhors the idea that resolution to his problems might lie in a return to the traditions of his forbears, but is bereft of any alternative models. After listing all the things one should do to be peaceful, and stating that the mere thought of his mother and father and their traditions makes him panicky, he again plays with double meanings inherent in Hindi to refer indirectly to masturbation. The verb *jhaṭaknā* (to jerk or jolt) and the noun *jhaṭak* (f. a jerk, wrench,) are used skilfully in this excerpt. In the first instance he uses the word *jhaṭak* in its standard usage, simply to indicate 'he gives his head a jerk.' In the second instance, there is a standard usage of the verb *jhaṭaknā* referring to him jerking his head as a way to jolt himself out of the memory of his mother and father. In the third instance the verb *jhaṭaknā* is used in a much more ambiguous fashion where he suggests that if he is alone then sometimes (after jerking) he grabs his head and sits down. This play on *jhaṭakna* is followed by the doubt that he cannot free himself from his mother and father and knows that he will not get liberation (*mukti*) in this lifetime. In this

context, masturbation and respect for parents are juxtaposed in a confrontational way referring to a "modern"crisis produced by the perceived tyrannies of parental figures and "traditions."

The way in which the celibacy model was used in nationalist discourse in the Indian context has been discussed by Alter as follows:

> Rhetoric and the body come together in terms of health, for the celibate body is regarded as supremely fit, and as such invokes a divine and heroic mystique of epic proportions. What emerges is a kind of medical poetics in which the male body is sexually analysed, systematically diagnosed and, finally, as rhetoric and theory are put into practice, disciplined according to a rigorous regimen. This regimen is thought to produce a citizen who embodies the essence of national integrity and strength. (J. Alter 1994, 45-46)

What we see in Vaid's juxtaposition of masturbation and yogic practice are the ideas of semen-loss anxiety and 'tradition' juxtaposed against the *modern* male sexualities which Srivastava has discussed in his book *Passionate Modernity* (2007). Bimal's embodied postcolonial identity experiences this conflict throughout the three stories which constitute the Bimal trilogy. Within the one character we see Bimal confronting traditional modes of discourse on male sexuality in terms of the model of celibacy and abstinence as a tradition which upholds Hindu culture. At the same time Vaid explores Bimal's use of masturbation as a counterpoint to the paralysis caused by the weight of these traditions.

As we have seen above, Bimal is plagued by existential boredom and despair both burdened by traditional semen-loss anxieties, as well as using masturbation as a strategy to relieve himself from these burdens. Furthermore, Bimal not only exposes himself as a serial masturbator, in both explicit and implicit ways, he also reveals that he finds no real meaning in the normative discourse of the traditions that surround him. Additionally he uses the very act of masturbation to refer to the aggravating effect the religious texts have on the protagonist's sense of alienation and isolation. The religious texts, parents and traditions are presented as having a thwarting effect on the emergenence of the autonomous modern individual.

My perspective is that Bimal comes to embody a 'modern' style of masculinity which is ambivalent, uncertain and both implicated in, and repulsed by, 'traditional' masculine ideals. In his book *Phallic Critiques: Masculinity and Twentieth-Century Literature*, Peter Schwenger discusses masculinities as presented in the fiction of a number of authors from the 'Virility School,' which includes authors such as Norman Mailer and Philip Roth. Speaking of style in relation to the presentation of masculinities in the fiction he points out that:

> ...in each of these men self-consciousness undermines their masculine assertion. Beneath the blatant *machismo* one finds considerable ambivalence towards the traditional masculine role. These writers recognise not only the role's power and its sense of archetypal fulfilment, but also its limitations, its self-deceptions, its destructiveness. What is said about life style applies just as much to the literary style of these authors. No matter what masculine style they develop, it tends to question itself, even destroy itself. (Schwenger 1984, 14)

And further that,

> A style is capable both of petrifying a self and of calling a new self into being...These men are far from simply accepting the traditional role; they are aware, much more than is the common garden-variety *macho*, of that role's complexities and paradoxes. Yet they will not free themselves of the role's hold over them. Instead, they circle around it, in simultaneous attraction and repulsion, centripetal and centrifugal force. Their writing styles, even in the most 'masculine' versions, reflect this ambivalence. (Schwenger 1984, 156)

The central point for the current analysis is that Bimal comes to represent the ambivalence Schwenger describes. Vaid carefully crafts Bimal's character so that it both confronts and problematizes what it means to be both 'Indian' and 'modern' in the postcolonial milieu and the anxieties which arise as a result of this tension. Bimal's body is used as a site of struggle and through it Vaid explores the boundaries in the Indian postcolonial environment around what is deemed acceptable and what is considered transgressive.

The following comments from Hindi critic Jaidev regarding the treatment of masturbation in Vaid's texts demonstrates a view that differs significantly from above analysis:

> Since masturbation cannot be exhibited in public, verbal masturbation is the next best thing, an acceptable form, both for releasing energy and seeking recognition for it...Bimal feels that he is a near-kin of many modernist and post-modernist heroes who value masturbation more than they value sex. *Bimal* is an energetic book, and comes loaded with intertextuality. Yet one feels that self-abuse should not be spread over two hundred and fifty pages. (Jaidev, 1993:141)
>
> Certain fundamental contents of life are customarily regarded as indecent and therefore taboo in art. As a result, they retreat into gossip, the men's room or into dreams and fantasies...It is not exactly news that Indians too masturbate or visit brothels. Such aspects have not been legitimized in our culture because they clash with its other, more valued aspects...Graffiti, mimicry, and candour abound in Vaid's fiction, but they are not accompanied by any involvement in, or commitment to, India or her culture. Nor do they have any humanity about them. They shock, but have only a negative function. (Jaidev, 1993:138-139)

These quotes from Jaidev are representative of postcolonial anxieties which Vaid's literature has provoked and demonstrate a lack of engagement with what the fiction represents. Jaidev imposes a moral argument on the text, interpreting Bimal as someone who values masturbation more than sex. On the contrary, the analysis has shown Bimal's sexuality and masculinity to be far more complex and multi-faceted than Jaidev's comments would have us believe. What exactly does Jaidev mean when he says 'such aspects have not been legitimised in our culture because they clash with its other more valued aspects'? Jaidev essentializes Indian sexualities by presenting masturbation and 'more valued aspects' as mutually exclusive. There is no doubt that Vaid's textual style is confronting, acerbic and shocking, but I argue that he exposes this idea of mutual exclusivity and provides an alternative through a politics of juxtapositions. Vaid is relentless in his confrontation of stereotypes and his critique of the postcolonial Indian environment and the multitude of sexualities that inhabit it.

In this context, Jaidev can be seen as but one representative of the crisis in the analysis of Hindi fiction (which is discussed in detail in Chapter Four). Jaidev states explicitly that he sees Vaid's fiction as having 'only a negative function.' We could suggest then, that in his mind, Jaidev has certain ideas about what the purpose of literature should be, and those ideas then pre-determine how it should be written. By definition, this imposes limits on his ability to criticize the fiction in a rigorous and analytical way as his responses are pre-determined by cultural considerations and morality, which results in a polemical rather than analytical style of analysis.

The references to masturbation and the anxieties which Bimal embodies with regard to tradition are but one of the ways Vaid's texts can be seen to confront Indian sensibilities and come to be referred to as 'vulgar'. Another way in which Vaid may be said to be confronting for his audience is through the sexualisation of literary discourse. In the following section, I discuss the ways in which ideas of mimicry and originality in the Hindi literary environment are referred to in the same context as sexual themes. Bimal is highly critical of the intelligentsia and critiques the basis on which their self-image is constructed. This creates distance between Bimal and his contemporaries as he both challenges and insults the people with whom he associates. It is also highly provocative as Bimal slips seamlessly in and out of fictional and real worlds. This can, then, be easily read as *Vaid's* criticisms of his own literary contemporaries.

Mimicry and the sexualisation of literary discourse

One of the criticisms against Vaid has been that he is too Western, and that he represents merely a mimic or pastiche of Western modernist models. In the fiction discussed below, it becomes evident that Vaid discusses mimicry in a different way to that of his critics. That is, implicit in his discussion (which is made explicit in later examples) is a critique of the 'canonization' of certain literature which remains unquestioned by Hindi authors, to the point that they cannot discern between what is original and what is a mere copy. In the following passage we see Vaid engage with ideas of mimicry, artificiality and influence from the West in a way that was much later taken up by postcolonial scholars such as Harish Trivedi (2007, 1993a, 1993b) and Homi Bhabha (1994). The confronting aspect of Vaid's approach is that he discusses these ideas in a highly sexualized context—for

example in a discussion about a woman's breasts—and refers the reader back to the postcolonial intellectual environment.

The following excerpt is taken from *BCFQ* and will form the backdrop in the discussion that follows :

> Today I have seen her again.
>
> Who?
>
> Who else? Wherever I look she is just there.
>
> Where?
>
> She was pushing her chest out. The cruelty of it. That cruelty, that hardness could break open an almond.
>
> They are definitely artificial.
>
> We who have been roaming about Connaught Place for the past decade, how come we haven't even until now been able to discern between mimicry and originality.
> What are you talking about?
>
> So you haven't touched them and seen them?
>
> Hey mate, had I touched them and seen them would I sit here with you people, let alone touching, the bitch didn't even let me check her out.
>
> And so understand that she passed by faster than the wind, with her breasts sticking out.
>
> Beautiful sister-in-law.
>
> Don't make a joke friend, one who suffers knows suffering.
>
> Nanak has said: the whole world is sad.
>
> I'm telling the truth, I don't want to look at a woman who has no [attractive] breasts.
>
> You should have moved forward and grabbed her.
>
> Easier said than done.
>
> And furthermore, this is India.
>
> Long live Mother India!
>
> Bimal's face goes red with embarrassment.
>
> How did those people suddenly go from talking about politics to sex. Sex and politics.
>
> Research can be done on this subject.
>
> Research can be done on any matter at all.
>
> And if you think about it, I am also doing a kind of research.
>
> Searching Bimal. (Vaid 1999a, 363-64)

In the above excerpt we are presented with a confronting discussion between a number of men in the coffeehouse about a woman they have seen. There is a strong sense of the male characters as voyeurs of female bodies. A woman who enters is

assessed, her physical body discussed, and the fantasy of actually having physical contact with her explored. The woman's body is presented as a site one can look at but not touch. It is worth mentioning that this idea of looking and commenting but not touching is not consistent across the fiction. It could be argued that it is a different kind of woman who inhabits the coffeehouse, compared to women on the bus, or in public places where a fair degree of frottage is indulged in by the male figures (which will become evident in the discussion on 'macho' masculinity later in this chapter). In this particular instance I am concerned with the way the male characters discuss the woman's body and the double meanings inherent in the discussions which refer the reader back to the state of Hindi literature and criticism and ideas regarding mimicry.

> *Sīnā tāne jā rahī thī. Vah sakhtī, vah saktī ki bādām toṛ lo.*
>
> *Tab zarūr naqlī hoṁge.*
>
> *Ham jo pichle dashak se kanāṭ ples kī khāk chān rahe haiṁ, hameṁ abhī tak naql aur asal kī tamīz bhī nahīṁ āyī? Kyā bāt karte ho?*
>
> She was pushing her chest out. The cruelty of it. That hardness could crack open an almond.
>
> They must be artificial.
>
> How come we who have been roaming about Connaught Place for the past decade, even now aren't able to discern between mimicry and originality? What are you talking about?

The above quote is an example of creating double meanings out of otherwise standard words. By way of brief explanation, the feminine noun *naql* in its standard usage has a number of meanings. In its first sense, it refers to copying; secondly, it can mean a copy or an imitation; and thirdly mimicking or mimicry. Further, its adjectival form *naqlī* means imitated, artificial, synthetic (McGregor 1993, 539). Vaid plays with this sense of artificiality via *naql* and *naqlī* in conjunction with the word *sakhtī* which in its primary meaning refers to hardness, and in its secondary meaning, cruelty (McGregor 1993, 972). So, in the first instance the male characters use the word *sakhtī* to refer to the cruelty of the woman, with chest sticking out, entering the coffeehouse teasing them with her beautiful breasts. But in the second instance, Vaid uses *sakhtī* to refer to hardness, by saying that the hardness of (her breasts) could crack open an almond. This leads into the male characters discussing whether or not her breasts are real or artificial. The breasts then, are projected as both cruel (and an object of male desire), as well as hard (as an object for rumination as to whether they are real or

not). This is promptly followed by Bimal questioning why, after ten years of roaming around Connaught Place, the men are still unable to discern between what is real and what is artificial, that is, an imitation and/or mimicry and what is *asal*, original or real.

There is a link to be made between the discussion of the artificiality (or not) of the woman's breasts and the discourse regarding what was considered authentically Indian literature, and what was a mere mimic from the West. Vaid carefully plays with language in the above sample to make comment about the literary (and socio-political) environment and the inability of his contemporaries to distinguish between what is original (double meaning of both breasts, but also literature) and what is mimicry (again, could be read as talking about breasts or literature).

In the postcolonial context, remembering that *BCFQ* was first published in 1965, the influence of Western literature, particularly colonial literature, on Indian writers had significant currency. In his article 'Colonial Influence, Postcolonial Intertextuality: Western Literature and Indian Literature', Harish Trivedi discusses influence and intertextuality with regard to Indian fiction. In one of the few critical pieces in English which actually mention Vaid, Trivedi refers to the colonial environment where influence from the West was considered positive:

> In colonial India...in the first flush of Western influence, it was seen as a badge of distinction to have been influenced by some Western author or other; a term of high praise for a writer was to be called, for example, the Walter Scott or the Byron or the Shelley or whatever of Bengal". (Trivedi 2007, 127)

In *Bimal in Bog*, Vaid refers in a fictional context to this feature of the Indian literary milieu:

> Bimal began to think if only he could talk that stupid Shyama into his own or someone else's bed for a fearless bout of feverish sex it might help Hindi literature some. And this stray wish derailed him once again into his own agonized thoughts of unfulfillment. Why can't I get my Shyama out of the clutches of her mother? Why can't I get rid of domestic drudgeries? I admit that the confrontation between a mother and daughter may still yield a scene or so to an Indian Dickens. (Vaid 2002a, 56)

This is another example where a discussion of sex is linked to a discussion of Hindi literature. Speaking of another woman in the text, Vaid uses the theme again on page 64:

> Bimal, you'll have to look very far to find someone superior to Rani. She reminds me of the Juliet in an Indian adaptation of your unattainable idol. You mean you are unfamiliar with that film? Perhaps you haven't seen the Hindi Hamlet either? Well this convinces me of your lack of culture. The Indian Juliet was a gem. (Vaid 2002a, 64-65)

And again on page 67:

> I feel like singing that song from the Indian adaptation of Adam and Eve. (Vaid 2002a, 67)

In these examples Vaid uses wit, sarcasm and sexual references to discuss the idea of the high-praise associated with understanding and 'mimicking' Western literary greats. Trivedi has pointed to shifting perceptions regarding emulation and imitation within the Hindi literary sphere. Here, Trivedi refers directly to Jaidev's comments about Vaid and Nirmal Verma and how intertextuality, which is construed as borrowing from the West, can be considered negative:

> Jaidev describes three of his four chosen novelists as being 'captivated by the lore of High Modernism and existentialism', both Western literary movements which he asserts have no valid relevance or resonance in India. By the term 'pastiche', which Jaidev says he uses interchangeably with "influence, imitation, adoption [and] intertextuality", he means to indicate that these novelists "willingly, almost gratefully, allow the [Western] influence to become the most dominant code in their novels."...Thus, if there was among some early enthusiasts of Western literature in the nineteenth century a marked anxiety to be influenced, there has apparently been a corresponding eagerness among some Indian literary critics of a later era to see postcolonial Indian writers as still being unduly influenced by the West. (Trivedi 2007, 129)

Vaid carefully plays with language in the above sample to make comment about the postcolonial realities being faced by the male characters, but this is only noticed it seems, by Bimal. Homi Bhabha's discussions regarding stereotype, mimicry and mockery are also relevant to this discussion. The references in Vaid's fiction to mimicry can be read in the context of challenging the 'mimic men' of

Indian writing and a contestation of the power relationships inherent in a colonial past. In his *Location of Culture*, Bhabha has discussed the idea of mimicry as:

> ...the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite*...Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around *ambivalence*, in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminancy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. (Bhabha 1994, 86 emphases in original)

In the case of Vaid's literature regarding mimicry, I would argue that Bimal constructs his contemporaries as slaves to their colonial past, they do not recognise the power structures inherent in their approach to literature. Bimal is acutely aware of Macauley's vision of:

> a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.' (Macauley in Bhabha 1994, 87)

Further Bimal, unlike his contemporaries, seems acutely aware of the deleterious effects of a commitment to the colonial past and the mimicry of English literature which came with it. Childs and Williams have described the 'menace of mimicry' as 'a sudden awareness of inauthenticity, of authority's constructed and assumed guise' (Childs and Williams 1997, 130). This is what Bimal confronts and challenges in the highly politicised postcolonial milieu in which he is situated.

Bimal's contesting of the idea of Indians as 'mimic men' is developed to a greater extent in *Bimal in Bog*, from which I provide excerpts below:

> But aren't you aware of Macauley's minute? Don't you remember he said that all of Indian literature is not enough for more than one package? That's what that unknown Bengali also says...Better known as the Indian Englishman...Let's not blame others for our errors. But for the English we couldn't have learnt bye-bye...English in fact has become the medium of our morals. English gave us etiquette. Unmade our native manners. Improved our ability to exclaim....Enabled us to quote Coomaraswamy. Taught us respect for time...Had the English not come

> the Moghuls wouldn't have gone. Read history. But for the English there wouldn't have been any Anglo-Indians. Nor any Indo-Anglians. The English gave our early freedom fighters balls. Boobs. Ballrooms. Ballbearers. Nightclubs. Nightsuits. Cigars. Pipes. Pubs. Bridge. Bearers. Beer. Badminton. Our ancestors had English nannies. Our ancestors are essentially English. We want our wives to be white. The English gave us a sense of our inferiority. Which was necessary for our self-esteem. ...We are staring at their leftovers. They master our minds. We treat them like our twin brothers. (Vaid 2002a, 114-115)

The tone here is sarcastic and acerbic, and yet Vaid articulated in his fiction, what scholars of postcoloniality have postulated many decades later. I argue that Vaid's acute awareness of the way the discourse of power and authority was constituted in terms of literary production and criticism is evidence of the fact that, to borrow Bhabha's terminology, Vaid proposes a 'threat to both normalized knowledge and disciplinary powers' (Bhabha 1994, 86). In this process he asserts an identity which is uniquely situated between colonizer and colonized. He is aware of the menacing power of mimicry, and at the same time able to distance himself from what he sees as mere reduplication. In the example provided above from *Bimal in Bog*, Vaid provides a long list of what Bhabha might refer to as fetishist stereotypes (that is the nightclubs, badminton pipes etc.) and links the stereotypes with the idea of the inferiority complex of the colonized. The idea that Indians stare at the leftovers of the British, and that the British are masters of their minds, is followed by, 'we treat them like our twin brothers.' In this example Vaid creates a picture of his contemporaries as identifying with the British as twins, but he recognizes the colonial power constructions which have perpetuated this view. In other words, Vaid refers to the colonized as 'almost the same but not quite,' (Bhabha 1994, 86), and himself as the only person able to see the opportunity this creates for resistance. In the context of the current chapter, it is the linking of literary discourse with sexual themes which is particularly provocative.

To return to the long excerpt from BCFQ provided at the beginning of this section, we see Bimal playfully invoke Mother India, and highly culturally specific literary references in the context of discussing the sexual prowess of the woman they have seen. Bimal says: 'let alone touching, the bitch didn't even let me check her out,' to which he is goaded by his male counterparts: 'you should have moved forward and grabbed her.' Bimal responds: 'saying it is easy, and furthermore, this is India. Long live Mother India.' Here, we see Vaid invoke the idea of the nationalistic slogan *bhārat mātā kī jay* in the context of the male gaze as it is

projected onto female bodies. To an Indian reader, this is one of the many examples where Vaid's juxtaposition of sexual attitudes and so-called perversions, could readily be construed as offensive. In addition to the reference to *bhārat mātā* in this section, Vaid also invokes Guru Nānak with the expression '*nānak dukhiyā sab sansār*/Nanak has said the whole world is sad'. What is critical for a reader not versed in Indian traditions is that Vaid uses immensely meaningful Indian concepts and phrases—invoking *bhāratmātā* and Guru Nānak—in an otherwise completely 'inappropriate' context. That is, to go from discussing a woman's breasts and the fact that you wished you could have grabbed her but were unable to, to referring to that situation as an example of one of Guru Nānak's great aphorisms that the whole world is suffering, and that the reason it would not happen is that 'this is India', is a highly confrontational writing strategy. This example is one of the many where Vaid uses intertextuality in highly confrontational ways, and actively provokes Indian anxieties regarding distinctions between the sacred and the secular.

The following example shows how Vaid uses inference and double-meanings in the text to refer both to Bimal's desire and arousal but also to critique the literary environment:

> *Siyāsat se ekdam uchal kar ve log seks par kaise jā pahuṁce. Seks aur siyāsat. Is viṣay par khoj kī jā saktī hai. Khoj kisī bhī viṣay par kī jā saktī hai. Aur sochā jaye to maiṁ bhī ek prakār kī khoj hī kar rahā hūṁ.*
>
> *Khojī bimal.*
>
> How did those people suddenly go from talking about politics to sex. Sex and politics.
>
> Research can be done on this subject.
>
> Research can be done on any matter at all.
>
> And if you think about it, I am also doing a kind of research.
>
> Searching Bimal. (Vaid 1999a, 364)

Here Vaid plays with a number of words in Hindi. Specifically, he uses the verb *khoj karnā* and closely related words to cast doubt in the reader's mind regarding nuances in his text. In the first instance *khoj karnā* is simply used in its passive sense to mean 'research can be done on the subject of sex and politics'. In the second instance, the usage is the same, 'research can be done on any subject at all'. In the third instance Vaid uses *ek prakār kī khoj hī kar rahā hūṁ*, that is, I am *doing* a kind of research, clearly distinguished from *khoj rahā hūṁ* which would mean 'I am searching', *khoj* meaning both search and research. Here we see Bimal's

research being referred back to the female figure in the story. That is, he is doing a kind of research with regard to his sexual lusting after the woman in question. In the final instance we have the one liner: *khojī Bimal*, searching Bimal. Again Vaid sets up a situation which is addressing the literary milieu of the time, gently prodding the Hindi literary establishment about its tendency towards endless research topics such as 'the connection between sex and politics.' This presents one of Vaid's concerns with the Hindi literary environment and Hindi criticism which had a reputation for cataloguing and list-writing, without significant intellectual engagement. The extent to which this lack of intellectual engagement with the subject matter was incorporated in the Hindi education system, and the effect this has on criticism of Hindi literature, will be discussed in Chapter Four.

In Hindi there are a number of words which sound very similar to *khoj*, but have vastly different meanings, and Vaid uses these different meanings to disrupt the meaning of the text. He creates a situation where the reader begins to wonder if there is also reference to Bimal as *khujlī*, meaning itchy; and the verb form *khujānā*, to scratch or feel itchy. The secondary meaning then is that as well as searching, Bimal is also 'feeling the itch'. Given the context this creates a situation where the reader is left, if not amused, then feeling as if Vaid is making a joke of the whole situation. Again, Vaid links ideas of sexual arousal 'feeling the itch' with the very serious issue of research in the Hindi literary environment.

As mentioned previously, Bimal is characterized by anxiety, doubt and despair, which reflects a larger existential crisis regarding alienation, exile, and what it means to be both 'Indian' and 'modern.' A significant feature of the Bimal trilogy of stories is that the language is highly sexualized and explicit (as the above analysis has shown), and yet a recurring theme is the struggle Bimal has with the idea that true love does not exist. In the following short section, the idea of Bimal as 'incurable' and faced with the idea that true love does not exist, further confirms his characterization as deeply troubled by the idea that sexual diversion stands in place of true love. The idea of an absence of true love as being linked to the city will be expanded later in this chapter. Here, it is used to strengthen discussion regarding Bimal as incurable and plagued by existential doubt.

Incurable Bimal

In the final paragraphs of BCFQ Bimal reflects with his contemporaries on the idea of true love:

> But can I ask one question?
>
> (it is both fundamental and eternal)
>
> Quickly, ask it
>
> The ghost of sex and the messenger of true love...
>
> True love?
>
> You are living in the twentieth century and...
>
> But wait, there is still one question?
>
> (Basic and eternal)
>
> Quickly ask it.
>
> The ghost of 'sex' and the messenger of true love...
>
> True love?
>
> You live in the 20th century and...?
>
> Get yourself a cure.
>
> Go to some doctor or philosopher.
>
> Take some mercury tonic.
>
> Get a massage.
>
> True love?
>
> Good heavens! Good heavens!
>
> Bimal is thinking. Maybe this is my biggest problem. *Brahmcarya* isn't breaking. Break it. Go and stand at some newspaper seller's shop and look at naked pictures. Or go into some urinal and make dirty pictures. Whatever filth is inside, you bring it out. All paths will become clear. The biggest cause of boredom—physical hunger. The result—bodily tension and discord of the soul, and aversion between them. Resolve it. Aura will come on the face and exhilaration in the eyes. Packed full buses, temples, cinemas, a jostling crowd, *Mathurā, Vrindāvan, Sangam.* Go on pilgrimage. Get up from here. Now. This minute. (Vaid 1999a, 380-81)

Here we are reminded that Bimal is a character beset by fundamental questions, which are both *buniyādī* (fundamental) and *anādī* (eternal), and the prospect of simply relieving sexual urges leaves him feeling perplexed and alienated. In the story, there is a constant tension as to whether his *buniyādī savāl* is fundamental or basic, and here we see an example of Vaid playing with the words *buniyādī* and *anādī* to illuminate the recurring and unanswerable nature of Bimal's questions. The nature of fundamental questions as distinct from the questions facing the nation are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. The discussion in this chapter is focussed on the sexual diversions in Delhi which lead Bimal to reflect on whether

or not true love exists. The tension between Bimal as the type of male prone to deep reflection is juxtaposed against the ideas of his contemporaries who seem to have given up entirely on finding answers, or questioning the situation in which they find themselves.

Bimal's colleague suggests that he should go and visit a *vaid*[25] (Ayurvedic doctor)or *hakīm* (wise-man/philosopher) to get some treatment for such ideas:

> *Kisī vaid yā hakīm ke pās jāo*
> *Kuśte khāo*
> *Māliś karvāo*
> *Sacce prem?*
> *Taubā taubā.*
> Go and see some Vaid or Hakīm.
> Take some mercury compound.
> Get a massage
> True love?
> Good heavens, good heavens.

In the context of a highly modernized city landscape, Bimal is referred back to traditional healing methods to cure his preoccupation with fundamental questions. The idea is that Bimal's contemporaries consider that something is wrong with Bimal, and that he needs treatment in the form of traditional medicine or a massage. This use of traditional remedies as being unable to solve modern problems is a recurring theme in the stories, and will also be discussed in Chapter Three with regard to the way Bimal's mother refers to traditional remedies in an effort to help Bimal resolve his problems. In this example however, *kuśtā* refers to a traditional Indian medicine (from the Unani and Āyurvedic traditions) with a well-known reputation for curing impotence, among other things. In the earlier discussion of masturbation, reference was made to the tension between the Gandhian gloss on semen-loss anxiety and the concept of *brahmcarya* on the one hand, and the more 'unofficial cultures of sexuality in India' as discussed by Srivastava (Srivastava 2007), on the other. In this example, we see Vaid reference the types of alternative approaches to sexuality that might now be found in the sex clinics of Delhi and Mumbai which Srivastava has discussed. The 'Sex and Vitality Clinics' are:

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[25] This reference to a Vaid as an Ayurvedic doctor can also be read as a play on Vaid's surname.

> [M]ainly an urban phenomenon with a large clientele of men (and sometimes women) from lower socio-economic categories. The clinics offer a variety of services to their clients: among them, 'cures' for sexually transmitted diseases, impotence, premature ejaculation; ways of enhancing sexual 'performance'; and methods of acquiring male progeny...These sex clinics operate within the larger context of a host of non-western healing systems, such as Ayurveda and *unani* (Srivastava 2007, 121-123).

Further on in a chapter entitled 'The Masculinity of Dis-location', Srivastava makes an important point regarding the consumers of the sex-clinics and footpath pornography:

> A salient aspect of this discussion forum, however, is that most of its participants have little or no voice in the metropolitan postcolonial culture of the nation-state; this forum is not the 'reading-formation' of civil society constituted through *India Today* or the *Times of India*, nor does it take part in the formation of the idea of 'postcoloniality' that has gathered around voices such as Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth. It does find some voice, however, in the writings of authors such as Manjul Bhagat and Bhism Sahni...In the postcolonial context, we can examine metropolitan and provincial cultures that have a particular relationship with respect to each other as well as to the wider changes we now characterize as 'globalisation.' (Srivastava 2007, 125)

In Vaid's texts we see the 'interaction between a particular kind of commodity culture, urban anxieties and "traditional" remedies, all of which are contiguous and overlapping contexts.' (Srivastava 2007, 127) Bimal considers the only solution to the fundamental question as 'going to the newspaper-sellers shop and looking at naked pictures', which refers to the footpath pornography that Srivastava also discusses. The booklets Srivastava describes have many functions, among other things,

> ...as a bridge between 'tradition' and modernity', as a window to the world of contemporary commodity culture, as the complex site of the fantasy culture of modernity, and as propaganda vehicles for a 'modern' nuclear family (Srivastava 2007, 129).

In the final pages of BCFQ Bimal problematizes the act of physical arousal as a way of distracting himself from the idea that there is no such thing as true love. The diversions on offer (in the form of, for example, footpath pornography) are no comfort, and Bimal is further depressed at the idea that responding to the body's hunger (lust) is proposed as a solution.

In the final paragraph of the excerpt we see reference to *brahmcarya* as 'not breaking'. There is an inferred double meaning in the Hindi original: *brahmcarya nahīṁ ṭūṭ rahā.* In its first reading it means that Bimal wants the celibacy to end; but on another level, the sentence can be read as 'I have an erection but it is not being relieved/breaking.' This makes sense in the context, as what follows are the suggestions about how one might relieve the erection via a number of transgressive behaviours.

Thus far, discussion in this chapter has focussed on the main character Bimal and the extent to which he embodies a style of masculinity which is uncertain, ambivalent, and highly disillusioned. He constantly questions the traditions, models and norms in front of him, and does this in highly confrontational ways. In many cases he juxtaposes sexual themes (so-called sexual 'transgression') against sensitive issues such as the role of Hindu tradition in modern India, and perceived weaknesses in the Hindi literary environment. In the following section the analyses explores the much 'firmer', more certain masculinity exhibited by Bimal's colleagues, and the way they are presented as less doubt-ridden, but also more aggressive in terms of their sexuality. The discussion does not mean to indicate that the ambivalent masculinity of Bimal and the more aggressive style exhibited by his colleagues are mutually exclusive. Rather, part of Bimal's crisis is that he is a participant in the 'macho' masculinity he describes, but is also repulsed and deeply troubled by it.

'Macho' masculinity and coffeehouse conversations

In the introduction to *Social reform sexuality and the state*, Patricia Uberoi comments on the way in which 'control' over women's sexuality has become a preoccupation of social science writing. In terms of the domination of men over women which social scientists have focused on, she has argued that:

> The assumption is that male sexuality is self-evidently , and *naturally,* aggressive and dominating, female sexuality passive and subject, and that an unambiguous and virile masculine self-identity will be expressed via domination over the Other. (Uberoi 1996, xx)

In the introduction to this chapter it was suggested that the historical backdrop for the discussion was the tension in the Indian context which Derné has described between the assertion of a strong, virile masculinity which could stand up to accusations from the British that Indian men were effete, and the celibacy model which emphasized self-control. Both of these were important aspects of the nationalist agenda. In the previous sections of this chapter the way Vaid engages with the celibacy model and its juxtaposition to masturbation via the character Bimal were discussed. In this section however, the argument shifts to look at the 'aggressive,' 'dominating' and 'unambiguous' masculinity that Uberoi has described, as it is presented in Vaid's texts. A number of examples from the texts are used to demonstrate Vaid's critique of the more 'macho' style masculinity represented by his colleagues, and how domination over women inevitably becomes part of the assertion of manhood.

Let me begin with an example from BCFQ which provides a sense of a highly 'macho' style of masculinity:

> Bimal suddenly decides that he should go. Then he puts both his hands on his knees, as if he were asking them: speak, what is your opinion? Instead of answering the knees begin to tremble. Bimal becomes flustered. He feels as if the knees are being defeated. In an effort to make them stable, he takes three very long breaths. As soon as he breathes out the last of the third breath, he goes into a fully-fledged coughing fit, and his whole body starts to rattle. With this rattling, the intention to get up is shattered. In the middle of this a new gang has come and sits down near Bimal. Looking in their direction with moist eyes, Bimal feels as if he might be surrounded from all four sides again.
>
> Surrounded from all four sides Bimal!
>
> One man from among the gang casts a shadow over all the others as he sits down....
>
> Today, I had great fun on the bus. For a while the electricity failed. Wow, I can't tell you. One ahead, one behind, I became sandwiched. At first I was very panicked. Then I thought: this is all His play. Such an incident doesn't happen all the time. I made great efforts to control myself. But after all I am human, I am a young man. A soft, melodious voice came from behind: Excuse me Bhai Sahib, some ill-mannered people are pushing me from behind. Let them push, I said to myself, may God save these lechers. It felt, sahib, as if two hot daggers were being thrust into my back. Just imagine mate? They must be fake, but what kind of idiot would reflect on the difference between what is fake and what is genuine? You know, I was over the moon. With this the electricity came back on. I looked left and right. The bus was

> filled with civil men. I thought, nobility has no limit. Look at God's creation, from Lodi Road as far as Connaught Place, a single passenger did not get off. Everyone remained where they were. Packed full. Perhaps the girl behind was restless because of the lechers. She was shifting here and there [to my delight]. But the woman in front, from beginning to end remained propped up comfortably. In short, today I got my money's worth. And the reality is that in His presence there is delay, but never injustice. Today I believe that, and in this delight I'll buy the coffee today!
>
> Hearing all of this Bimal shuddered. He began thinking, if there is a solution to fundamental questions, then it is this: Sit in the bus from Lodi Road, and when you get to Connaught Place, get off. Listen to the call of the body. Not the call, the scream. Don't rack your brains on basic questions; when the body is asking for food, not basic questions. A dose of unexpected physical contact, in the bus, in a crowd, on the train, anywhere at all, every time, every morning, afternoon, night. Go and take an unbroken pilgrimage from Lodi Road to Connaught Place. Break free from the pursuit of these groundless questions whatever way you can. Look around you. Occupy your mind in some task. Listen. (Vaid 1999a, 377-78)

In this example, we are exposed to the sexual delight experienced by one of the coffeehouse patrons during his bus journey to the coffeehouse. In contrast to sexual ideas of male characters we have considered in previous examples, the male character describes an event which was a very public encounter, and involves actual touch and physical stimulation, rather than sexual projections and fantasies only. There are a number of striking features about this excerpt regarding the presentation of masculinities in the text.

We see in the man who took the bus journey from Lodi Road to Connaught place, a very *macho* style of masculinity on display. He enters the coffeehouse full of bravado and excitement that his bus ride was delightful as he had the opportunity of rubbing against not only one, but two women on the journey. He recounts the experience as one of intense gratification. So exhilarating in fact, that he wants to buy his friends coffee to celebrate. The man who describes his bus journey, presents it as an overwhelmingly positive and sexually gratifying experience. He cannot believe his good fortune when a woman is pushed into him from behind, resulting in her apologising for the situation. The sensation of the woman's hard breasts pushing into him from behind is so arousing that his erection is described as 'propping up' the woman in front of him. The man's description of the woman's voice is also stereotypical, that is, it is soft and melodious (*dhīmī sī* and *surālī sī*), the voice is presented in itself as part of the titillating experience, added to by the woman apologising to him for pushing into him. In this context the man is not accused of any infringements of personal space, rather he is apologised to by the woman, who blames the ill-mannered men behind

her. Thus the man celebrates the fact that he could himself indulge in the sexual gratification of the circumstances without being blamed for any incursion of social etiquette.

The male character's description of the woman's breasts pushing into him refer back to previous discussions on artificiality and mimicry. He comments that her breasts were so hard that they must certainly have been artificial (*naqlī).* He then continues by ruminating on what kind of unfortunate person (*kambhakht*) would reflect on the distinction between what is fake (*naqlī*) and real (*asal*). After all, in this context, the main point is that the sexual stimulation was in and of itself satisfying, with no need to ruminate on whether or not the breasts were real. This comment regarding what is real and what is not, reminds the reader of the reference earlier in the story where Bimal reflects on why, after ten years of roaming around Connaught Place, he and his contemporaries are unable to discern the difference between *naqlī* and *asal*, what is real and what is artificial. In the context we came across earlier, the discussion was also centred on a woman's breasts. We can take this man's comment then, as a direct joke at Bimal's expense. Debate as to what is real and what is artificial thus becomes a recurring theme in this story, referring to both the woman in question and the state of Hindi literature in the postcolonial environment. The man ridicules the idea that anyone would waste time on such questions (as Bimal had done previously), when he could simply be enjoying the experience.

The vocabulary Vaid uses to construct this male figure is steeped in cultural symbolism. Here I explore the way Vaid uses religious references such as the idea of Divine play in a subversive way to assist his construction of the macho male personality. When the electricity goes out, everyone is at first confused, the man is sandwiched between two women, but then he reflects that this is all His Play (*Phir socā yah sab usī kī līlā). Līlā* in its Hindu religious context refers to the divine play of gods, specifically Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. In the context of Gauḍīya Vaishnavism it refers to the 'divine love-play between Rādha and Kṛṣṇa in a spiritual or perfected body. This erotic love and attraction between Rādha and Kṛṣṇa is 'pure love' (*prema*) as opposed to an impure worldly love pervaded by selfish desire (*kāma*) (Flood 1996, 139-40). More generally speaking, *līlā* can be interpreted simply as the 'acts of a deity at pleasure' (McGregor 1993, 897). While *līlā* in certain religious

contexts is already imbued with erotic connotations, so Vaid's use of the term here is unconventional in that it is used by the man describing fleeting sexual pleasures on a bus, where there is no sense of any kind of spiritually meaningful eroticism; on the contrary what the man describes is much more consistent with the idea of *kāma* as worldly, fleeting desire, than the erotic *prema* of Rādha and Krṣṇa.

In the same paragraph, the male character summarizes his good-fortune on the bus by drawing again on religious imagery, but this time from a much more Urdu-influenced vocabulary, thereby invoking Muslim religious connotations rather than Hindu.

> *Aur asal bāt to yah hai ki uske huzur meṁ der to hai, aṁdher hargiz nahīṁ. Āj ham use mān gaye aur usī khuśī meṁ āj kī kāfī ham pilāyeṁge.*
>
> And the reality is that in His presence there is delay, but never injustice. Today I believe that, and in this delight, I'll buy the coffee today.

Both of these examples are representative of Vaid's constant use of mixed vocabulary and imagery. None of the words are uncommon, in fact, they are common Hindi expressions, but they are located in places in the text which have a subversive and disorienting effect. In this case, the expressions are used to add humour and texture to the conversation, assisting in the construction of the *macho* male.

There is also in the man's comments a certain 'naturalisation' and justification of his transgressive behaviour. He suggests that he made great efforts to control himself but that ultimately he is human (*insān*) and young (*naujvān*), and events like this don't happen very often. This I argue has a naturalising effect, legitimising and justifying the behaviour in the context. The ideas of male sexuality as '*naturally* aggressive and dominating' and 'female sexuality passive and subject' which Uberoi (1996) refers to are played out in this scene. Vaid provides his character with language which supports these ideas and gives the reader a sense that the man can justify his behaviour on that basis. The implicit meaning being, 'surely, you would have done the same in my situation.' By extension, we can say that these comments present the idea of stereotypical male misbehaviour as unable to be controlled. Rather than being in control of his sexual urges, the man justifies his behaviour by appealing to his audience's sense of what is natural for a young virile man, thereby presenting himself as victim of the body, rather than agent. The style of language with which Vaid has endowed this character fits the

male stereotype and is consistent with Schwenger's 'language of men' (Schwenger 1984, 24). The rough language supports the stereotypical male image being created, and is adopted as a way of asserting the masculine bond of the coffeehouse patrons. This is important, as it naturalizes a bond which relies on ideas of men as 'virile', 'strong' and 'aggressive', and stands in contrast to the uncertain masculinity exhibited by Bimal.

Thus we can see the *macho* male distinguished by a number of characteristics: he is unconcerned with differentiating between what is real and artificial; lewd with his language; prone to bragging about his sexual exploits; commands a physical presence as he overshadows the other men as he sits down; and unable to control his sexual behaviour in public spaces.

In the paragraphs immediately preceding and following this account, we see the character Bimal in stark contrast to the *macho* male stereotype. Prior to the man from the bus interrupting his thoughts, Bimal has the urge to leave the coffeehouse, but is distracted by his knees and becomes flustered. In the process of taking three deep breaths to try to calm himself down, he has a coughing-fit so severe that he loses the resolve to get up from the table and leave. The arrival of the gang of men, leaves him feeling surrounded. Vaid's vocabulary within this context is worth considering: the word *ghuṭnā* is a masculine noun meaning the knee. In the context above, we also have descriptions of Bimal as coughing as a result of his anxiety, and being surrounded on all four-sides. In this context Vaid is also referring indirectly to *ghuṭnā* in its verb form meaning to be constricted or feel tension (as in 'dum ghuṭnā'). Although this is an indirect reference, it assists in creating a scene where the image of Bimal is one of somebody who feels suffocated in his environment, and whose anxieties prevent him from being able to leave the coffeehouse when he wants to do so.

The *macho* male's description of his transgressions on the bus disturbs Bimal deeply, and he is left reflecting on the idea of answering the call of the body as the only way to distract oneself from the deep-thinking involved with fundamental questions. Random physical contact and its concomitant arousal becomes the solution. The text is sarcastic, with Bimal challenging the idea that there is nothing more than the body. In this context Bimal is characterized as a thinking male, distinct from his contemporaries who appear purely body-obsessed.

In the case of the macho male, sexuality is presented as very public. Sexual arousal and gratification in a public space is discussed openly in the coffeehouse. Frottage on the bus is validated and naturalised in this context, supporting the characterization of the *macho* male as asserting stereotypical manhood. The man presents his experience as being worthwhile in and of itself. His manhood is both constructed and confirmed by his account of the bus trip. In terms of the broader argument of the thesis, it is argued that Vaid has consistently brought together aspects of Indian culture which have previously been kept apart, that is sexual tradition and the sacred, and sexual arousal and masturbation being linked to Indian intellectual and literary integrity. He is also highly explicit, which has a confronting effect, and constantly problematises the transgressive discussions and acts of the intellectual classes. Vaid's targets are his contemporaries, and the dominant discourse and paradigms on which their existence is constructed.

A supermarket of women: 'bitches', 'devis' and 'high-class goods'.

In the following section I consider Vaid's manner of dealing with the various types of women 'available' in the postcolonial context. A strong link between the sexuality of the women discussed and ideas of what constitutes a 'modern' woman is explored in a great deal of the material. The emphasis here is on women as the subject of the mostly 'macho' male gaze. It has been mentioned earlier that any discussion of female bodies in the fiction selected for analysis needs to be considered as representative of the male views. This inevitably raises issues of hegemony. In order to situate the analysis theoretically, this needs some explanation. Scholarly interventions such as Subaltern Studies and postcolonial studies, and anthropological emphases on the everyday (for example N. Kumar 1988) have made enormous contribution to discussions regarding giving voice to discourses which have previously been unheard or obscured. To this end, we have in the last two decades or so witnessed a proliferation of studies that explore hegemonic structures of thought and action, whether these be colonial or post-colonial. In the case of literature, this has meant a much greater focus on, for example, Dalit literature and literature written by women, representing women's perspectives[26].

[26] Mukherjee (2008, 94-101) has discussed this increased emphasis on Dalit literature and 'Women's Writing', and has provided many references which support this statement.

To relate this to the main argument of the thesis, part of the postcolonial context in Hindi literature referred to involves the emphasis Hindi authors and critics placed on representing 'subaltern' voices. This resulted in a preference for literature which focused on, for example, women's writing and Dalit writing (or writing which was seen to accurately represent women or lower castes). It will be remembered that in Chapter One the influence of socialist realism and the AIPWA (All-India Progressive Writers Association) was discussed in influencing how Hindi literature 'should' look. This preoccupation with creating women as subjects to be brought to light is a feature of this situation. By definition, this meant that realism as a literary method predominated at the same time as modernism. This creates an enormously complex environment with regard to the discussion of women.

In Vaid's literature we can see a deep engagement with the ways women are used as symbols of the national consciousness. He deplores the idea that 'the woman becomes merely the site on which larger political claims are made and contested—on behalf of the nation as a whole or in the context of communal, caste or regional politics' (Uberoi 1996, xii). The manner in which he approaches the issue however, is by exposing 'coffeehouse intellectuals' as being part of this discourse and the 'macho' male as supporting the 'iconisation of women as symbols of nation and community' (Uberoi 1996, xii). That is to say, he problematizes romantic notions of 'civil society' through exposing its gendered nature.

In the following example, male views in *BCFQ* are considered in relation to projections of women as not only a commodity, but also as active players in the game of so-called 'carnivalesque promiscuity'. We see not only representations of the males as wanting casual sexual relationships with unknown women, but also male projections about the licentiousness and 'dangerous nature' of the modern women. The literature develops to suggest women not merely as *objects* of the male gaze and lust, but as active participants: flirtatious, ready for sex, and 'feeling the itch' as much as any of the male figures. This, I suggest, is a masculinist understanding of the agency of the 'modern' woman that Vaid deploys in order to critique this form of masculinity. In the current analysis male discourse is exclusively discussed, as there is little evidence in the text of female direct

discourse. Clearly in the passage below there could be no argument for female agency, as the woman in question never has a chance to represent herself: she is created and defined exclusively by the male onlookers. This, I suggest, is a narrative strategy of critique that Vaid deploys.

> Watch out, look over there, there is some female figure committing a calamity.
> Hold onto your heart.
> Who is it?
> It might be anyone.
> She is from the Punjab?
> She is from Bengal?
> She could be anyone.
> She is a disaster.
> (She is coming, walking flirtatiously)
> Look at her flirtatious mannerisms.
> (ham ṭakhrā[27] dekheṁge)
> Look at her hair.
> (I will look at her cheek.)
> Look at her gait.
> (We will look at ther form)
> Look at her eyes.
> Look at her breasts
> Look at her youth/look at how ripe she is.
> (Look at the washerman's wife who is 720lbs.)
> Where will she sit?
> (Let's see how the matter will be resolved[28])
> She sat down.
> The bastard is fortunate.
> It might be her brother.
> Even then he is fortunate.
> (And a bastard as well)
> They all look good from a distance.
> But how flirtatious is she sahib?
> She is shooting arrow after arrow.
> (she is showering bullets)

---

[27] I have been unable to establish what the word ṭakhrā means so have not translated this sentence. It is possibly a typographical error as it is very unusual in Hindi for a retroflex ṭa to be followed by the Urdu kha.
[28] Literally: let's see on which side the camel will sit.

And you are saying that in India you'll only ever find lodging with good girls.
(bird's night shelter[29])
Dear friend, in our country there is everything.
Then you started reciting a nationalistic tune.
This bastard is a devotee of the country/Bhagat Singh
Shoot him.
Put your hands up. (Hands up)
Now she is arranging her eyebrows[30].
(The poor thing's fingers will be cut off)
Hey friend, she is feeling the itch.
Who doesn't get the itch?
Punjabis are generally very uncouth.
And what about the Punjabi women?
Those bitches too are no less uncouth.
Hey mate, do you remember that joke?
I don't remember anything this time.
He's lost his senses. (Vaid 1999a, 372-373)

One of the striking features of this excerpt is how the male characters grapple to define the female figure who has come into their gaze. In the context of the anonymity of the urban environment, the woman could be anyone. The men consider whether she is Punjabi or Bengali, and twice in a short space of time agree that she could be anyone. Here it is suggested that a useful way of analysing this excerpt is in terms of the men seeing the desirable, lascivious female in the context of one of any number of females available in the supermarket of modernity. The woman could have come from anywhere, be going anywhere, and could be from any one of a number of diverse backgrounds. This is in contrast to traditional Indian social circles where a person's social position and background would be known. She is by definition anonymous, and has to be in this context in order to be subject to the comments from the male figures. It is not just the anonymity of the female figure in question here. The men ruminate as to whether the man she sits near might be her brother, agreeing that even if he is he is both fortunate (*khuśqismat*) and a bastard (*harāmī*).

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[29] This reference will be discussed in detail in the analysis that follows.
[30] The Hindi word in the original is *ubrū*. I assume this is a variation on *abrū*, eyebrow, but have been unable to confirm the accuracy of my suggestion.

Vaid also uses rhyming pairs to maximum effect in the excerpt. The men comment on her eyes, her gait, her breasts, her youth, and in many instances there are references to the woman's sexual prowess. As well as the use of rhyming pairs for full literary effect and humour, Vaid uses Hindi expressions to refer to her beauty. One such example being '*nau man kī dhoban dekho,*' literally, look at the washerman's wife who is 720lbs, *man* being a measure of 80lbs, *nau* being nine, meaning nine multiplies by 80, which is 720lbs. *Nau man kī dhoban dekho* is an expression used to refer to a particularly attractive woman, and is used in a joking way here, meaning 'look at that dream girl.' This phrase—though now rarely heard—was part of a wider repertoire of allusions to particular kinds of female sexuality that was not uncommon in say, Hindi songs of the 1950s and 1960s. The 'Dhoban' and the 'Gujaria' (women of the Gujar caste) made frequent appearances in this context, their invocation carrying connotations of wild female sexuality, associated with lower castes. Returning to the excerpt above, the descriptions continue, with the woman shooting 'arrow after arrow' (*tīr par tīr calā rahī hai)* which in its Indian context refers to Kāmdev's arrows of lust, but is immediately followed in brackets by *goliyāṁ barsā rahī hai,* meaning she is showering bullets on everyone. This is a particularly interesting juxtaposition of Kāmdev's arrows of lust against bullets, and gives the reader the impression that the times have changed: the modernity of the modern woman lies in her capacity to combine older traditions of desire with newer weapons of injury. She is also described as 'feeling the itch' (*are yār khujlī ho rahī hai/*hey mate, she is feeling the itch), noting here the explicit use of the word *khujlī* with respect to being sexually itchy, which was nuanced but not explicitly stated in earlier examples.

As the men find themselves discussing what kind of woman she is, they seamlessly slip into discussing her moral characteristics, and the piety (or lack thereof) of Indian women more generally:

> *Aur tum kahte ho ki hindustān meṁ sirf deviyoṁ kā hī baserā hai.*
> *(chiṛiyā rain baserā)*
> *Apne deś meṁ sab kuch hai pyār*
> *Phir tum ne deś rāg alāpnā śuru kar diyā.*
> *Yah sālā deś bhagat (sinh) hai*
> *Ise golī se uṛā do*
> *Hath upar uṭhāo* (hands up).

And you are saying that in India you'll only ever find lodging with good girls.
(bird's night shelter)
Dear friend in this country there is everything.
Then you started reciting a nationalistic tune.
This bastard is a devotee of the country/Bhagat Singh.

This excerpt is replete with culturally specific references, which need considerable explanation for the full effect of the text to be understood in a non-Hindi/Indian context. In the first sentence the male character questions his friend, asking if he thinks only pious girls reside in India. What is important here is that the word chosen is *devī* which as well as meaning goddess, with all of its connotations regarding piety is also, as most Indian readers will know, an extremely common ending on girls' names in northern India. This reference is followed in brackets by *chiṛiyā rain baserā* which is a quote from a Hindi bhajan. The full line Vaid is referring to here would usually be *na ghar terā na merā, chiṛiyā rain baserā* meaning neither is it your house or mine, it is simply the bird's night shelter. In its usual religious context, the bird would represent the soul and the house the body, meaning the body is the shelter for the soul, and everything is illusion (*mayā*). But what Vaid does here is take the bhajan out of its usual context, and place part of it (enough to remind the reader of the tune and rest of the words in the song) in the context of discussing sex and female morality. Thus, *chiṛiyā rain basera* is transformed in Vaid's text into meaning, 'sleep with one person one night, and someone else the next.' Not only this, but the next sentence refers to the fact that in India there is everything. The meaning here being that in India there are all sorts of women, pious ones, promiscuous ones, the inference being that promiscuity is not reserved purely for Western women, which confronts once again the dominant discourse regarding women as the bearers of morality and spirituality which Chatterjee has discussed in *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Chatterjee 1993). Chatterjee argues that anticolonial nationalism is seen as represented via two domains, material and spiritual. Men in this context are charged with responsibility for the material sphere, and women with the 'inner' and spiritual domain. Chatterjee bases this idea on there being an acknowledgement that the West had proved its superiority with regard to things material, e.g. science and technology, but that the East still reigned supreme with regard to spirituality and moral integrity. Speaking of the distinction made in nationalist formulations

between degenerate women and morally superior women, Chatterjee points out that:

> It was precisely this degenerate condition of women that nationalism claimed it would reform, and it was through these contrasts that the new woman of nationalist ideology was accorded a status of cultural superiority to the Westernized women of the wealthy parvenu families spawned by the colonial connection as well as to common women of the lower classes. (Chatterjee 1993, 127)

Chatterjee's argument can be built upon in the context of Vaid's literature, in that it is precisely the idea of Indian women as culturally superior that Vaid challenges in the text, by suggesting that all types of women are available in India. This is a theme that recurs throughout the story. For the purposes of discussion regarding the 'carnivalesque promiscuity' of Vaid's characters, we can see in the three lines discussed above that Vaid's references to the female characters as being promiscuous, in a context which also directly references deeply spiritual parts of Hindu culture, would be considered highly controversial. The idea that Indian women could be held up as morally superior and as gatekeepers in protecting Indian spirituality is one which Vaid continually attacks and confronts.

In the wake of Vaid's deconstruction of the idea of either the male or female characters as gatekeepers of sexual morality, he refers directly to this as a nationalistic tendency: 'Then you started reciting a nationalistic tune'. Bimal refers to his friend as a devotee of the country, but in doing so, uses a play on the word *bhagat* (from the word *bhakt*, meaning a devotee, literally one who abstains from meat and alcohol) with Singh in parenthesis. This then refers the reader to the freedom fighter and revolutionary of the independence movement, hanged by the British and thereafter declared a martyr, Bhagat Singh (1907-1931).

To open discussion of female sexualities as presented in the fiction under analysis, the following excerpt from BCFQ is provided.

> Have you ever seen two Punjabis (or Punjabi women) quarrelling with one another? No? Then what have you seen [in your life]? They are the most vulgar of insults.
>
> Punjabi bitches.
>
> Punjabi people are thick as bricks.

And good of heart.

And carefree natured.

(Simple-minded and romantic!)

But Sir, Punjabi tastes are very inferior.

Not true.

Punjabis acknowledge *Dalḍā* oil as the biggest enemy of India!

Punjabi earth spits out gold.

But Sir, Punjabis are very uncouth.

Have you ever seen Punjabi embroidery?

Have you ever heard Punjabi folklore?

And Punjabi *hīr*?

And Punjabi folk-dancing?

Punjabi girls are very beautiful.

(wrestlers)

There is structure in their bodies.

There is dexterity.

(Look at the fullness of their youth!)

The Madrasi women are dark.

The Bengali women are flabby.

So what of really big eyes and melodious voices?

We are slaves of appearance, what about her morals?

Well said!

Bimal Will you listen to something more? Then listen...

In this Delhi city of ours there is everything.

(Delhi is a city which is a chosen one in the universe!)

You don't need to go to Mumbai, or to London or Paris.

So what do you need?

Vision.

And courage.

And money.

And the biggest thing, the lines on your hand should be straight.

Everything is available in Delhi.

Fairskinned girls.

Dark skinned girls.

Local and foreign girls.

Literate and illiterate.

Old and young.

One needs vision.

One needs courage.

One needs money.

And your fate should be good.

And sir, I am not talking about brothels.

Upperclass goods.

Before independence, we were helpless, but now this kind of business is open in every lane and alley.

College chicks.

They'll get dirty just by you looking at them.

Girls educated in English schools.

From good families.

Singers and dancers.

I am listening to the story of my own experiences.

Girls with these short fashionable haircuts who you'd be over the moon just talking to.

Girls from good families.

Of high caste.

In Delhi you get everything.

You get nothing

If you got something we wouldn't be sitting here. (Vaid 1999a, 378-80)

In this excerpt we see Vaid use the stereotypical images of various types of Indian women as a transition into a discussion of the types of women 'available' for male consumption in the city of Delhi. Vaid, himself a Punjabi, begins with a number of references explicitly about Punjabis. This is by no means the first place in the text where Punjabi stereotypes are referred to, and the texts are littered with such examples. The importance of the references lies in the manner in which it refers to Punjabi women as being capable of the most vulgar of insults and as being simple-minded and romantic, leading to further comments on Punjabi traditions such as embroidery (*phūlkārī*), folklore (*māhiyā* and *hīr*) and folk-dancing (*bhangṛā*). In keeping with Vaid's predilection for satire, he then goes on to discuss the beauty of the Punjabi girls, qualified by comments in brackets which make fun of the very stereotype he sets up.

Puñjābī laṛkiyāṁ bahut <u>kh</u>ūbsūrat hotī hai

(pahalvān)

Unke jism meṁ gaṭhan hotī hai

Custī hotī hai

(jubnā kā dekho ubhār)

Punjabi girls are very beautiful
(like wrestlers)
There is structure in their bodies.
There is dexterity.
(Look at the fullness of their youth).

Here we have an indication of a transition into discussing females in a sexual context, the reference to the fullness of youth, comes with connotations of sensual attraction. This is preceded by references regarding their build and nature. The beauty and sensuality is but one aspect, they are also built like wrestlers and simple of mind. This discussion of Punjabis is then expanded to lead into an exploration of the stereotypes of many other types of Indian women; women from Madras are dark; Bengali women are flabby. In a style consistent with other parts of the texts, Vaid uses the comment and retort method to maximum effect. For example, the comment on Madrasi women as dark and Bengalis as flabby is immediately followed by the line: *baṛī baṛī āṁkhoṁ aur surālī āvāzoṁ se kyā hotā hai* (so what of big eyes and beautiful voices); the meaning here being, what good are big eyes and beautiful voices if the women are fat. In the sentence *sūṛat ke ham qualm haiṁ, sīrat huī to kyā* (we are slaves of appearance, but what about morals) the play on words with *sūrat* (body) and *sīrat* (morals/qualities) functions as a transition to discussing the types of women available in the modern city. The lines that follow unapologetically refer to the types of women available as objects of male sexual desire.

Apne is dillī shahar meṁ sab kuch hai pyār!
(dilli bhī ek shahar hai ālam meṁ intkhāb!)
In this city of Delhi of ours, there is everything , friend.
(Delhi is a city which is a chosen one in the world!) (Vaid 1999a, 379)

New Delhi is contrasted with the cities of Mumbai, London and Paris, that is, there is no need to go to these places to find such a wide array of women, as all things are present in Delhi.

One might recall here that this aspect was also referred to in earlier discussion where the words *chiṛiyā rain baserā* (bird's night shelter) from a nationalist bhajan popular in India were used in the context of sexual promiscuity:

And you are saying that in India you'll only ever find lodging with good girls.
(bird's night shelter)

Dear friend, in our country there is everything (*apne deś meṁ sab kuch hai pyār*). The reference to Delhi as being home to a wide array of women for sexual consumption, is repeated further on in the passage on page 380, *dillī meṁ sab kuch miltā hai* (everything is available in Delhi). However this time it is preceded by a very long list of the different types of women and girls a man might find at his disposal. The idea of the freedom of choice available in Delhi is constructed, only to be destroyed by the line *kẖāk miltā hai* (there's nothing at all [available in Delhi]).

There are a number of important points to be made regarding this text. Firstly, the listing of the types of women available is created in a style reminiscent of a spruiker for a brothel, advertising the women he has available for sexual services. The modern women here are put forward as anonymous sexual objects but the reader is quickly reminded that this is not in fact a discussion about brothels (*maiṁ cakle kī bāt nahīṁ kar rahā*/I am not talking about low-class brothels), rather it is what is available everywhere. Furthermore, the line *āzādī se pahle kī bāt aur thī, ab to har galī muhalle meṁ yahī dhandhā khulā huā hai* (before independence it was another matter, but now this kind of business is open in every lane and alley), seems to be referring to the idea that before independence everything could be blamed on foreign rule, but with independence, the situation has deteriorated further.

In her article on Satyajit Ray's films and the meeting of sexualities and cities in postcolonial India, Bose states that:

> It is clearly no passing coincidence that one of the most significant symbols of the degenerate modern city, sterile, mechanical, soulless as it is, is the sexually promiscuous woman—a recurrent sign used symbolically, metaphorically, and metonymically across cultures to signify a changed, if not deranged, landscape. (Bose 2008, 40)
>
> Since the public woman is so intimately connected to (male) perceptions of disorder, danger, and desire, and the urban space is considered to be representative of dangerous, if alluring, modernities it is perhaps not surprising that female sexuality emerges as symbolic of a seductive degeneracy analogous with the modern city. (Bose 2008, 42)

It is precisely the masculinist idea of 'seductive degeneracy' that Vaid seeks to both explore and problematize through confronting his readers with their own image.

In the following examples I show how Vaid carefully constructs Hindu ideals, only to dramatically deconstruct them in his reference to the rape of a woman (who can also be read as India). In terms of a writing strategy, intertextuality is used to maximum effect in setting up the discourse only to dramatically deconstruct it, with the narratorial comment that follows.

The rape of Lajo in the bazār

In order to illustrate Vaid's narrative strategies in the texts selected for analysis, the following quote is provided from BCFQ. The first line of the excerpt is Bimal's mother reflecting on her lack of fortune in having only one boy and four girls:

> I used to think, one boy. Four girls. Oh God! The fruit of which actions am I getting? Hypocrites. This is the foundation of Hindu society. Duty. Action. Shame. A girl named Lajo was raped in the middle of the market-place. Save Lājo's modesty because this is a time of dire straits. Our society, our grain, our profit and interest, our sense of decency, is all in your hands. Young people, get up and grab onto your responsibilities, rise up, flee, run, guard, there is a fire which is spread all around, make it pour dew on its sparks. Sing merrily. Oh clouds rain! The rainy season is terrible for separated lovers. Rain softly. On the beloved. On the sinner, on the pied-crested cuckoo. Rain! Writhe for it. *Thak dhinā dhin*[31]. I am united with you. Beloved I am lost in you. In the rainy season. There should be some purpose facing a man, son! Don't wander about this way. You will be lost from wandering about. (Vaid 1999a, 366)

The excerpt above refers to a specific aspect of patrilineal and patriarchal ideology, that which relates to 'son-preference', which is a well-established phenomenon in Indian society. The mother in the above excerpt says: *yah mujhe kin karmoṁ kā phal rahā haiṁ*, meaning, 'the fruits of which actions am I reaping?' The words *karm* and *phūl* are culturally specific here, referring to the idea of *karma* in Hindu tradition, where each action is said to have inescapable consequences, in this or subsequent lifecycles. The idea is that it must have been the result of a past negative action, which has led to her having four girls and only one boy. It is relevant though, that she says that is how she *used* to think (*maiṁ soctī thī*), indicating that she would have preferred to have more male progeny, but Bimal has made her change her mind. This and other discussions between Bimal's mother and father confirm Bimal's characterization as aimless, and without purpose in life. The mother is characterised here (and in other parts of the text) as

[31] *Thak dhinā dhin* is a tabla rhythm used in Indian music.

a religious woman, not only via references to *karma* and the fruits of her past actions, but also her calling out *he bhagvān*, 'hey God'. The next sentence consists of only one word, *daqiyānūs*, which we can suppose is the father or the narrator saying 'hypocrites'. These few lines set up the discourse as being specifically Hindu, and pave the way for what follows:

> *Hindū samāj kā ādhār. Dharm. Karm. śarm. Luṭ gayī lājo bīc bajriyā. Lājo kī lāj bacāo ki yah saṅkaṭ kā samay hai. Hamārā samāj, hamārā anāj, hamārā sūd aur byāj, hamārī lāj, sab tumhāre hāthoṁ meṁ hai.*
>
> This is the foundation of Hindu society. Duty. Action. Shame. A girl named Lajo was raped in the middle of the market-place. Save Lājo's modesty because this is a time of dire straits. Our society, our grain, our profit and interest, our sense of decency, is all in your hands. (Vaid 1999a, 366)

In terms of socio-cultural context, the terms *dharma* (religion, duty) and *karma* (action and its consequences) are regularly seen together in the Hindu context, so up until this point in the text, Vaid has led the reader in more-or-less predictable ways, regarding Hindu philosophy and the views of the mother figure. However Vaid follows *dharm* and *karm* as the foundations of Hindu society with *śarm*. *Śarm* means shame, or modesty, and would not usually be seen in conjunction with the religious concepts of *dharm* and *karm*. Vaid creates this disjuncture, using rhyme to full effect, to contest the sanctity of Hinduism, where the foundation of society is not only *dharm* and *karm*, but also *śarm*, shame. Hence, we see Vaid seamlessly leading the reader into views on the hypocrisy of Hinduism.

The next line in the story is: *luṭ gayī lājo bīc bajriyā*.

The verb *luṭnā* means to be plundered or looted (McGregor 1993, 898) and in this context it translates as the rape of Lājo in the open market. There are a number of intertextual references here, which have a fracturing and subversive effect on the text. The female name Lājo, comes from the Hindi word *lāj* meaning, shame, sense of decency or modesty. Of course, in its use as a name for a girl or woman, it brings with it positive connotations, not negative ones. In this context then, we can see Vaid more dramatically disrupting the text. This use of Lājo as the name of the woman being raped, also refers the reader back to the three fundamentals of Hindu society that Vaid proposes *dharm*, *karm* and *śarm* (duty, action and shame).

In many cases, the name *Lājo* is a shortened form of the name Lājvantī. Lājvantī is the name of a type of sensitive plant. With this in mind, the reader may

well be reminded of the story by one of Urdu's most prominent fiction writers Rajindar Singh Bedi (1915-1984), by the title *Lājvanti*. (Bedi 2007). It should be noted that Bedi was among several writers deeply committed to Marxism and the Progressive Writers' Association (S. Das 1995, 274). This being the case, we can see Vaid's textual reference to an alternative 'centre', that is Urdu Progressive literature, as an unsettling influence on the text. The story *Lājvanti* by Bedi is about the carnage of the Partition and the abduction by Muslims of Lājvanti/Lājo, who is the wife of the main male character Sunderlal. The story sees her eventual return to her home, but things are very different on her return. One of the most powerful effects of Bedi's story is the way he deals with the fact that Lājo has had a sexual relationship and/or has been raped by her Muslim abductors, and this dramatically changes the relationship she has with Sunderlal when she returns. It is fair to say that the defilement of Lājo and the impact this has on their relationship is a major theme in Bedi's story. It is a deeply moving story, and the final lines give some indication of the style in which it is written:

> Slowly, happiness was replaced by suspicion. This was not because Sunderlal had begun to mistreat her again, but because he continued to treat her with excessive kindness. Lajo didn't expect him to be so gentle...She wanted to be Lajo again, the woman who could quarrel with her husband over something trivial and then be caressed. The question of a fight didn't even arise. Sunderlal made her feel as if she was precious and fragile like glass, that she would shatter at the slightest touch...She began to gaze at herself in the mirror and came to the conclusion that she would never be Lajo again. (Bedi 2007, 32)

We might remind ourselves here of Vaid's concerns with the dominating influence of the Progressive Writers' Association, and the impact Marxist and socialist inclinations had on Hindi (and Urdu) fiction in terms of preferencing a realistic and sentimentalised style of literature over all others.

There is another reference in the line regarding the rape of Lājo in Vaid's text. The phrase *luṭ gayī lājo bīc bajriyā* is a phrase from the 1947 Bollywood movie *Chīn le āzādī*. This is but one reference to Hindi film songs embedded in the text. This particular reference is indeed preceded by one of the most significant parts of the text regarding Vaid's engagement with postcolonial Indian

nationalism. However, this discussion will be reserved for Chapter Three, where I deal with the trope of the nation within literary productions. Lājo can be read not simply as a woman's name, but as Mother India herself. Certainly the lines that follow, 'save Lājo's modesty because this is a time of dire straits. Our society, our grain, our profit and interest, our modesty, is all in your hands' (Vaid 1999a, 366), strike at the heart of Indian nationalist discourse.

Let us focus for the present on observing how Vaid uses intertextuality not only with regard to rape, but also in the transition that follows from political discourse, presented in comparatively standard Hindi, to a much more poetic mode of writing, which conjures up the language and imagery of the romantic trend in Hindi literature.

The text shifts from the violence of rape, to highly poetic language regarding eroticism and romanticism.

> *malhār gāo. barso re. bairan rut barsāt kī. rim jhim, rim jhim barso. Piyā par. Pāpī papīhā par. Barso. Tarso.*
>
> Sing merrily. Oh clouds rain! The rainy season is atrocious for the separated lovers. Rain softly. On the beloved. On the sinner, on the rain-bird. (Vaid 1999a, 366)

This sequence is an example of romanticised language, which in an ordinary context would be considered characteristic of Hindi devotional (*bhakti*) literature. However, Vaid subverts this more traditional language by embedding Hindi song lines into the text; the line *bairan rut barṣat kī*, is a line from one of the songs sung by Lata Mangeshkar in the 1964 film *Dooj kā Cand*. Bharat Bhushan (1920-1992) was the director of the film, as well as the lead star, and as well as becoming a Bollywood actor of major acclaim was known for playing sad and alienated characters.

Discussion returns now to the song line itself, and its singer Lata Mangeshkar. Sanjay Srivastava devotes a chapter of his book, *Passionate Modernity*, to the role Lata's voice played in 'tendencies that come to gather about Lata's singing voice and attribute to it the characteristic of 'good', and the 'authentically' Indian feminine (Srivastava 2007, 79-80)'. Srivastava explores the 'public dimension of the 'woman question' in the career of Indian modernity through the pervasive influence of a popular music singer who has, as it were,

crafted an entire structure of emotions, gender and sexuality during the twentieth century' (Srivastava 2007, 83-84). Furthermore, he suggests that:

> [Lata] provided a resolution to the 'woman question' in the postcolonial context: how to have women in public, but also within the firm grip of a watchful, adult masculinity, so that the public woman became forever infantilised. The process of 'purifying' Indian public culture took the form, then of purging it of its Muslim associations and its connections with various realms of (non-middle-class) disreputability. Lata Mangeshkar's voice, it can be argued, became the site for the unfolding of this project: a place at the crossroads of a public culture where the adolescent girl's voice-persona appeared to provide the opportunity to express both an *appropriately* modern femininity, and a suitably Hinduised nationality. (Srivastava 2007, 98)

Vaid has used the associations and connections to which Srivastava refers, which serves the purpose of imparting an unsettling effect on the text. It is argued that Vaid uses the intertextual reference and the embedding of famous song lines to confuse and challenge the national imagery as it was constructed. He first sets up the discussion around fundamental Hindu concepts, then deconstructs it by reference to the rape of *Lājo* and then shifts into a much more romantic style. It is also interesting that Vaid shifts the focus dramatically from rape, to the motifs of rain, and the rainy season, *barsāt*. In Indian tradition the season of *barsāt* and rain more generally has important connotations of eroticism.

The embedded film song text is followed by *rim jhim, rim jhim barso. piyā par. pāpī papīhā par* (Rain softly. On the beloved. On the sinner. On the rain-bird.) These lines present another example of the highly culturally significant language. The *pāpīhā* is a real as well as mythological bird. The *papīhā* bird is for example, referred to many times in the literature of medieval poet-saint Mīrā Bāī (c.1498-1547). The rain bird is known for bringing on the rain and drinking only as much water as it can hold in its beak, however, with the rain comes the pain of separation.

These references to a highly romanticised style of literature are promptly deconstructed by the rhyming pair *barso* and *tarso. Barso* means rain (being the

imperative form of *barasnā,* to rain), and *tarso* is the imperative form of *tarasnā* meaning to long for, to be tantalised or teased, to suffer (McGregor 1993, 441). In this context, we can read *tarso* as the deconstructive element, the narrator effectively saying: 'suffer for it'. We can see this as an example of the Vaid wit, using *tarso* to refute the symbolism and metaphors inherent in the previous lines.

The two lines '*tak dhinā dhin. tum se mile ham'* are also an embedded Hindi movie song line, from the movie *Barsāt* (1949). Importantly in this case though, *tak dhinā dhin* functions on a number of levels to disrupt the text. *Tak dhinā dhin* is a tabla rhythm used in musical performances and often indicates a transition in the performance. In this context, Vaid uses it not only as an embedded song text but also as a signposting mechanism for the upcoming transition in the narrative. I suggest that *tak dhinā dhin* in this context can be read as a euphemism for masturbation, the narrator indicating that the above approach (that is, one of romanticism and sentimentality in Hindi literature), is all a masturbatory act. Given that the text is replete with references to auto-eroticism, as discussed earlier, this is a reasonable interpretation. The text then transitions into the narrator's memories of his father urging him to find purpose in life: 'you will be lost from wandering about. Before crossing the street, look both ways son!' This is the transition out of romantic and sentimental language, back into the narrator's memories of his parental figures and the burdens of tradition. This burden of tradition and the role of ancestors will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

The main purpose of the above analysis was to contextualise the reference to the rape of *Lājo.* What became evident was that rape, as a violent act, was juxtaposed against highly romanticised and deeply culturally significant language, with reference to the eroticism and pain of separation between two lovers in a mythological context. Inevitably any discussion of rape leads to the question of nation, and the situating of women's bodies, and violence of women's bodies, within the framework of the nation (see, for example, Menon and Bhasin 1998). With regard to both British colonialism and the Partition the rape of women became absorbed into nationalist discourse. Speaking of the difference in the presentation of rape in British literature compared to Indian literature, Lothspeich points out that 'while British texts foreground outrages, that is, affronts to British honour too horrific to describe in detail, Indian texts emphasize issues of purity

and pollution in figurative rapes about the violation of a nation' (Lothspeich 2007, 3). During colonial rule, rape narratives in Indian literature were 'very concerned with the notions of ritual pollution or defilement and work to demonize individual predators, if not the Raj itself' (Lothspeich 2007, 10); furthermore, '[t]he association of female corporeality with a gendered nation is a common one in Indian literature of the [colonial] period'. (Lothspeich 2007, 5-6). While Lothspeich writes about the colonial period, and this thesis focuses on the postcolonial one, the point here is that there is a tendency in rape narratives to demonize the perceived 'other', as has been pointed to by Menon and Bhasin (1998), for example.

When we consider the aftermath of the partition of the subcontinent, the discourse around rape focused on the rape of Hindu women by Muslim men, and the rape of Muslim women by Hindu men. Again, Muslims were demonised by Hindus as rapists, and vice versa. These paradigms are not uncommon in terms of creating an enemy of the opposition, and the politics of power being played out on women's bodies via rape and violence against women. Rajindar Singh Bedi's short story Lājvanti can be seen to represent the discourse of rape in this context, i.e. the Hindu woman abducted and defiled by her Muslim captors (the demonized 'other').

In the case of literature (both fiction and non-fiction), there are many examples where these dominant paradigms, i.e. creating an evil out of the perceived 'other', via the rape of women are discussed. What is particularly interesting in the way Vaid deals with rape in the example described above is that the rape and the surrounding discourse is wholly situated in the Indian context, without any reference to a demonized 'other'. Cultural paradigms, such as the sanctity of the Hindu tradition via principles of *karma* and *dharma* are set up, only to be destroyed by reference to the rape of a woman in the open bazaar. The inference of the text as the narrator presents it is that the rape of the woman occurred undisputedly within and as a result of Indian, specifically Hindu, culture. The blame then falls, not on Muslim perpetrators of violence against pious Hindu women, nor is it something that can be blamed on the colonial imperialists. The connotations of the text lead the reader to conclude that the narrator places the blame on Hinduism and Indian tradition in and of itself. Thus, the highly culturally-

specific elements, embedded textual references, and the use of romanticised language have an unsettling effect on the text. This cultural specificity presents a strong indictment of the Hindu tradition. The embedded texts from Hindi movies and devotional hymns have the effect of fracturing the text, and the paradigms that would otherwise accompany it.

Having discussed some of the features of the uncertain masculinity of Bimal and the more aggressive 'macho' masculinity of his colleagues, the final section of this chapter assesses the way in which the metropolis (and spaces within it) is used as the physical location in which the events take place. The metropolis is presented as an alienating place, where true love does not exist. The use of space in the stories confirms the theme of the city as a place of exile, and eternal homelessness, shades of which have already been discussed but which are elaborated on below.

The Loveless City: the alienation of the urban metropolis

One of the themes that emerges in the literature analysed is that the metropolis for the protagonist (primarily Bimal) is a site of alienation and existential crisis. The city is also characterised as somewhere where true love does not exist and transient relationships or sexual arousal are seen as a distraction from existential problems. The metropolis as a site of alienation is not unique to Vaid's fiction. As mentioned in Chapter One, it was a theme which developed particularly in the *nayī kahānī* period; it was also used as a *mis-en-scene* in a number of films, as discussed in the case of Satyajit Ray's films by Bose in her article 'Modernity, Globality, Sexuality, and the City: A Reading of Indian Cinema' (Bose 2008), referred to earlier. The following paragraphs examine how, in the examples provided earlier in this chapter regarding sexual 'transgression', the commentaries provided by Bimal ultimately return to reflect on spaces in the metropolis as alienating and the transgressive acts as a method of distraction from the existential issues being faced.

The metropolis in Nehru's period came to represent progress and modernity, Srivastava describing Nehru as the 'flaneur of metropolitan fetishism' (Srivastava 1996, 404), with love for the nation and love for the family known cultural leit-motifs of the Nehruvian period. Vaid critiques the idea of the city as a site for love and intimacy, presenting it instead as a site of alienation. In Vaid's

texts love in the metropolis, of any kind, is seemingly absent, and this lack of intimacy and the anonymity of urban existence results in random sexual acts devoid of intimacy. The sexual acts are intimately connected to physical spaces within the metropolis. The following discussion provides some examples of how Vaid presents the city as an alienating space.

The trilogy of Bimal stories are set in New Delhi, which is explicitly stated multiple times in the text. In the case of BCFQ the story opens with Bimal anxiously trying to decide whether or not to enter the coffeehouse. Previously in the analysis it was established that one of the problems of grappling with fundamental questions was that as Bimal wanders around Connaught Place and other attractions of Delhi, he is not able to enjoy things he might earlier have been able to:

> ...ever since he has encountered these fundamental questions, he doesn't like the least bit, the laughter of saucy females. (Vaid 1999a, 360)

We are also told in the early paragraphs that Bimal is so plagued by his fundamental questions that he is oblivious to his surroundings and doesn't even notice that he has knocked over a whole row of bicycles at the bicycle stand. The example is repeated here as the analysis that follows is different to that offered earlier in the chapter:

> The question is very basic, however nearly every evening Bimal has an encounter with this dilemma and by the time he reaches the cycle stand he stops if not for hours, then certainly for minutes, and the cycle stand Malik (or perhaps the lackey of the Malik) is very agitated by this habit of his because Bimal doesn't just stand there, but several times he has become lost in thoughts and starts to walk up and down and once or twice in continuously walking up and down he has totally knocked down a whole row of bicycles. (Vaid 1999a, 358)

In his dilemma regarding whether or not to enter the coffeehouse he has become oblivious to and irritated by the external circumstances around him. Bimal is represented as someone who both outside the coffeehouse (in the public domain of the metropolis), and inside the coffeehouse (among his supposed contemporaries), is alone and doesn't belong. His inner world repeatedly intrudes on the external circumstances of his existence. There are no references in the texts to places within the metropolis where Bimal expresses belonging or a sense of being an 'insider.' The outside places referenced in the texts are, on the whole, constructed as isolating spaces. Furthermore the 'if-we-were-to-go-then–where –

would-we-go' (*jāyeṁ to jāyeṁ kahāṁ*) refrain is repeated multiple times throughout the text, indicating that there is no escape from the crises he faces.

In BCFQ Bimal is presented as a relative newcomer to the city, that is, he moved to Delhi after the partition of India. Bimal refers to the time when he arrived in Delhi as one when he never tired of walking endlessly around the verandas of Connaught Place as he struggled to deal with his new environment:

> ...today too, arriving at Connaught Place Bimal did his three whole trips of the verandas. There once was a time when, until about two or three years after Partition, when Bimal had come newly to New Delhi, he used to get a real physical sense of relief from doing his circuits around the verandas, and what was three circuits? He used to still be fresh even after doing thirty rounds....When Bimal was young and he wasn't concerned about such matters [fundamental questions]Bimal would ogle, and if he got an opportunity sometimes he would be overwhelmed just by brushing with someone. Not always, but sometimes, he becomes very sad remembering that period, and then thinking this, his sadness is turned into anger at whether or not the compulsion of coming to Connaught Place and doing his circuits every day is perhaps a product of that very time, the only remaining habit. Whatever it may be, so it may be, Bimal remains very disturbed at this compulsion of his. (Vaid 1999a, 359)

The anonymity of the city, and the city as a tiring, relentless place where the company of crowds of people is no consolation to the alienated, lonely protagonist, is developed also in Kamleśvar's *Khoī Huī Diśāeṁ* (Losing all Sense of Direction) published in 1963. There are multiple references in Kamleśvar's story to New Delhi as alienating, and the main theme of the story is that the protagonist Candar is searching for recognition in a city of unknown faces. The sense of tireless walking around the city, which we see in Bimal is also present in *Khoī Huī Diśāeṁ:*

> Candar was standing with the help of a railing fixed to the bend in the road. In front and to the left and right was a flood of people. Night was falling and the lights of Connaught Place were starting to flash. His feet were giving him trouble on account of his exhaustion. Despite not having gone anywhere particularly far, his whole body was filled with tiredness. (Kamleśvar [1963]1993, 139)

The theme of crowds in the urban metropolis is well documented in the broader trend of literary modernism. For example, Raymond Williams discusses the crowd as a major theme in modernism, and the closely related second theme being 'an individual lonely and isolated within the crowd' (Williams 1989, 40). In both Vaid's fiction, and Kamlaśvar's *Khoī huī Diśāeṁ*, this theme of the urban crowd as a sea of unknown faces which has an overwhelming and alienating effect is developed.

A large part of the introduction to BCFQ is dedicated to Bimal's indecision as to whether or not to enter the coffeehouse. The coffeehouse is the main location of the story and is skilfully used to juxtapose notions of inside and outside. Bimal starts and finishes the story outside the coffeehouse, with only a relatively brief and alienating episode actually inside the coffeehouse. Significantly, while the first several pages of the story are committed to Bimal's deliberations as to whether or not to enter the coffeehouse, the reader is provided with no description of him actually entering. In a narratological reading this constitutes an ellipsis in the narrative. The ellipsis is important for the current argument as the coffeehouse is used as a physical marker for Bimal's anxiety and alienation. The idea that the coffeehouse is supposed to be somewhere where like-minded intellectuals with a similar political agenda can get together to discuss ideas is deflated in the story as Bimal is totally unsatisfied by the experience, and has his anxieties confirmed. The implicit message in Vaid's story is that the coffeehouse as a physical location is removed from reality, its patrons too caught up in their own issues to really do anything useful about the real problems (the *buniyādī* savāl) in the outside world. The notion of the coffeehouse as a site of community breaks down as the social space itself becomes a source of anxiety. The type of community the coffeehouse represents is problematized in the texts. In the Indian context, coffeehouses were known for being patronized by members of the left wing intelligentsia, including those with allegiance to Communists and progressive writers. Hence, Vaid's comments in the text have a particular salience with regard to communism and socialism in as much as they address a physical space known for attracting patrons who support the communist and progressive models.

In the instance of the male coffeehouse patron discussing his excitement and arousal on the bus trip from Lodi road to Connaught Place, it was argued that the location of the incident as both in the city of Delhi and also on a bus is significant. The bus in that example can be seen to represent both a crowded public space in the metropolis, as well as an anonymous one. While the bus trip from Lodi Road to Connaught Place is presented as a source of delight for the coffeehouse patron, it is made explicit that the only reason he had the opportunity for arousal was because it was packed full of passengers. The bus as a marker of the crowded and anonymous nature of the metropolis is also explicitly stated in *Khoī Huī Diśāeṁ*:

> The buses came making a thrumming noise, hesitated a moment, vomited passengers from one side, swallowed them in on the other and went on. (Kamaleśvar 1993, 139)

The idea of the bus as a place where male figures can have physical, sexualized contact with a woman, is also confirmed in Vaid's story 'A Triangle' (First published in Hindi as *Trikoṇ* in 1967) which is written in three parts, from the viewpoint of three different people describing an extra-marital affair (specifically one sexual encounter). In the first section the man describes his account of his sexual interlude with his friend's wife;in the second, the woman describes her view of the sexual encounter; and finally the woman's husband describes that he saw them having sex and what his view of it is. The male who has the affair describes his declaration of desire for his friend's wife as follows:

> My tone and words were wrapped in a naked smile, and I should have been embarrassed by their wet sentimentality, for I pride myself on my no-nonsenseness. Instead I was vibrating with sensations of the kind I've often experienced while pinching a bottom or squeezing a breast in a crowded bus or during an occasional shoplifting. (Vaid 1972, 84)

This further supports the argument that public spaces, in this instance buses, are used to indicate anonymity and that the anonymity of the urban bus tolerates some degree of sexual transgression, in an environment where intimacy and physical warmth are seemingly absent.

In terms of the presentation of women in the texts, there is a strong link between the menfolk of the stories' descriptions of the women as sexually attractive, and 'ready for sex' and the metropolis as being the place in which such women appear. Their perceived availability and discussion of them in highly sexualised ways is consistent with promiscuous women as a sign of the degenerate city, as discussed by Bose:

> It is clearly no passing coincidence that one of the most significant symbols of the degenerate modern city, sterile, mechanical, soulless as it is, is the sexually promiscuous woman—a recurrent sign used symbolically, metaphorically, and metonymically across cultures to signify a changed, if not deranged, landscape. (Bose 2008, 40)

In the examples in Vaid's literature that I have discussed, the fantasies of the male coffeehouse patrons regarding sexual contact with the women they encounter or

observe is reflective of the 'seductive degeneracy' Bose described, and I referred to earlier.

In BCFQ we are also presented with an example of both the danger and anonymity of urban sexual desire where in discussing the attraction they feel for a woman the coffeehouse patrons comment as follows :

> The bombshell of a woman has finished her coffee.
>
> Now she is getting up.
>
> So we are also getting up.
>
> We will follow her.
>
> Whichever bus she gets into, we will get into that one.
>
> And what if she has a car?
>
> We will lie down on the road [in front of her].
>
> We will become martyrs.
>
> And then a statue will be made of us on which it will be written in black letters—an unknown lover!
>
> Bimal stays alone at the table. He thinks, people had self-respect (people should always have self-respect, in the same way that every shopkeeper should be trustworthy, and every building should be magnificent, and every woman of good character, and every young woman alert). (Vaid 1999a, 375)

This example is striking as it constructs the idea of the woman as both sexually attractive (*kayāmat*, literally meaning doomsday, but which I have translated in English as bombshell) and modern and independent. That is, she is not able to be identified with any males, she may even have her own car. In considering what would happen if the men ran out after her, they decide that they would perhaps become martyrs (*śahīd*), having been run over by the woman, and their only epitaph would be *ek gumnām āśiq*, literally, an unknown lover. The city woman in control of her own environment, and as someone who can independently drive a car around the city is significant in its connectedness to the fact of her being a sexually attractive woman. It is also notable that men ruminate on being named her 'unknown lover', which has an emasculating effect and also plays upon the nationalist notion of the 'unknown soldier'. The woman is dangerous in her ability to arouse the men, is independent, and significantly, is oblivious to the men or their desires. Regarding the emasculating effect of the modern city and the sexual empowerment of women Bose says:

> It is possibly true that Ray's male protagonists appear to represent more obviously the horrors of social dystopias associated with economic hardships, but it is important, I think, that much of that sense of degradation and helplessness that the modern city appears to engender is visualized through feelings of sexual emasculation for men, and correspondingly through experiences of a sexual empowerment for women often born out of desperation, as potentially dangerous as it is heady. (Bose 2008, 45-46)

In addition to public places being sites for distraction via frottage and sexual arousal, private spaces are also used in Vaid's texts as places where Bimal is deeply anxious in his solitude and suffocated by his surroundings. Further, it is in these private spaces that acts of masturbation occur, when he is overwhelmed by the burden of tradition and the inability to write. The idea of inescapability permeates the texts, and in the opening paragraphs of *Samādhi*, Bimal tells us:

> ...today I have sat, with the firm resolve of Bhisma. Today I will not give in to moving from here. (Vaid 1999a, 341)

As he becomes increasingly frustrated by his inability to produce anything, he rips up the pages in front of him we are told that:

> The sound of the ripping gradually became lost while splitting the stillness of the room... (Vaid 1999a, 342)

The idea of the room as silent and unyielding and offering no intimacy is stated explicitly:

> This room is like a check [chess piece]. Different sorts of people come into this room and go from this room, they come and go, countless characters of Bimal's stories have come into this room from time to time, having blown their own (out of tune) trumpet, and have left embarrassed, cursing Bimal's name, But this room is that lifeless, that cruel, that it does not yield the slightest bit. What is this? Alas this room. Alas, the solitude of this room. (Vaid 1999a, 344)

The room in which Bimal sits is unyielding and is a private space, and yet it still offers no sense of intimacy. In the examples we saw in the section on masturbation, it was in this room that the masturbation took place. Far from being a self-gratifying act in the texts, it was used to indicate frustration and anxiety regarding the burden of traditions and the memory of his father. The private room in this context is constructed as a place which is as anxiety producing as the external cityscape, or the coffeehouse. The silence of the room is no comfort, and it is a

constricting, suffocating place. Bimal's sense of alienation from his social world is complete and he is equally distant from private and public spaces he inhabits, with neither community life nor solitude offering any solace.

The main argument of this chapter has been that accusations that Vaid's literature represents an obsession with sex or is obscene, is a misjudgement based on anxieties his literature provokes regarding a Western style of promiscuity which is deemed inappropriate in the Indian context. What the analysis has shown is that while the literature certainly has many examples which are confronting, it also demonstrates a deep engagement with the way the male characters in the stories negotiate their masculinity in the postcolonial urban context. Bimal was viewed in the context of displaying an ambivalent style of masculinity, one which was uncertain, and deeply troubled regarding the use of 'traditional' masculine models in solving 'modern' existential problems. Through direct and indirect references to masturbation, and a highly sexualized discussion on literary discourse Bimal provides a sharp indictment of the socio-political and literary milieu of his time. The ambivalence of Bimal was contrasted with the much more 'macho' masculinity of his coffeehouse colleagues. In the context of this more aggressive masculinity, the way in which men negotiate 'modern women' in the stories was discussed in terms of how Vaid critiqued stereotypes of women, and the way 'the woman question' was part of nationalist discourse. Ultimately, in each case sexual arousal or sexualized discourse led the reader to reflect on Bimal's existential despair, characterised by boredom, anxiety and hopelessness. In the final section of the chapter the metropolis was discussed in terms of how Vaid uses the city as a site of alienation and loneliness, which stands in contrast to the Nehruvian idea of love for the city (and within the city) as a feature of the modernizing process. The texts used for the analysis certainly exhibit Vaid's predilection for sarcasm, irony and rupture, but accusations that they are 'pornographic' need reconsidering in light of a deeper understanding of the issues he explores.

Chapter Three: Dialogues with the Nation

In this chapter excerpts from the fiction which deal with the nation and nationalism in postcolonial India are discussed. Specifically, how Vaid engages with postcolonial Indian nationalism, consistently rejecting it as being unproductive. The chapter is divided into three main sections. Firstly a discussion of Vaid's approach to ancestors, and the burden of tradition, in terms of rupturing dominant paradigms of what role tradition plays in defining Indian modernity. Secondly, the disconnect between the questions facing the nation and Bimal's fundamental questions are considered. Thirdly, the role of language in nationalist discourse is assessed, particularly Hindi as a major political issue, and how the texts define and deal with the language problematic in post-colonial India. The overall argument of the chapter is that charges of a lack of Indianness or authenticity in Vaid's fiction are largely the product of postcolonial nationalist discourse of the era and reflect the postcolonial circumstances which have been described earlier.

In terms of the Hindi literary scene of the 1960s and 1970s, discussed in some detail in Chapter One, it is argued that despite modernism notably changing the style and content of Hindi fiction, with themes of disillusionment and alienation becoming more common, there still remained a basic commitment to the idea of literature needing to be demonstrably 'authentic.' As a result, this meant that literature not deemed authentic, or representative of Indianness as the intelligentsia believed it should be construed, was viewed less favourably than literature that did. Vaid consistently confronts notions of authenticity and sentimentalism about the past; moreover he does not just confront them, he intentionally constructs a picture of the dominant narrative, only to dramatically present it as obsolete and unhelpful. What emerges is that rather than representing a lack of commitment or authenticity—in terms of the set of attitudes in Hindi criticism that have been under criticism thus far—Vaid's fiction demonstrates a deep engagement with the socio-political milieu of the time and utilises rupture and dissonance as key writing strategies in confronting discourse on the Indian nation.

In terms of framing discussion about post-colonial Indian nationalism, there follows a quote from Jawaharlal Nehru as an indicator of the centrality of the idea that India needed to utilize any lessons it could from the industrialized West without falling into the trap of a mere imitation of the West. Speaking of India's modernizing process and urging Indians to accept the changes needed for India to modernize Nehru says:

> I doubt very much if this change [i.e. of adapting to Industrialization and modernization] will result in her [India] losing her individuality, which has been her traditional feature throughout her history. Indeed, it would be a pity if she lost her uniqueness and individuality and became merely a copy of the industrialized West. (Nehru in Dallmayr and Devy 1998, 189)

Secular nationalism, which characterized the Nehruvian era in India, had a significant impact on and strongly influenced the Indian intelligentsia, which included politicians, artists and writers among others. Nationalism as a trope in fiction, both in India and the rest of the world, has been discussed by many scholars, and it is well-known that nationalist discourse had a significant impact on literary output.

> [I]t is especially in the Third World fiction after the Second World War that the fictional uses of 'nation' and 'nationalism' are most pronounced. The 'nation' is precisely what Foucault has called a 'discursive formation'—not simply an allegory or imaginative vision, but a gestative political structure which the Third World artist is consciously building or suffering the lack of. 'Uses' here should be understood both in a personal, craftsman like sense, where nationalism is a trope for such things as 'belonging', 'bordering', and 'commitment'. But it should also be understood as the *institutional* uses of fiction in nationalist movements themselves. (Brennan 1990, 45)

In Hindi fiction the idea of nationalism as a trope for the 'belonging' and 'commitment' Brennan describes, is particularly evident, and the idea of the institutional uses of fiction is highly relevant with regard to the post-colonial secular nationalist environment in India. Both of these ideas will be explored in some detail in this chapter.

The Burden of Tradition: Mothers, Fathers and Sons of the Nation

One of the themes of *nayī kahānī* writing was the feeling of alienation when one is disconnected from the traditional family and group support (Roadarmel 1969, 246). This was often seen as a result of the movement of people to the cities and the breakdown of traditional extended families. Vaid is among a number of authors for whom alienation and increasing states of despair became prominent themes in the post-independence period. What is striking about Vaid's fiction is that rather than offering any sentimentality or sense of mourning of the loss of traditions and traditional familial relationships, it is the traditions and family roles that come in for criticism. Traditions and the older generation are construed as a significant part of the problem preventing India (and Indians) from moving forward in productive ways. This is not to say that the fiction demonstrates a lack of hope; in fact it seems to indicate that what is needed is a major re-evaluation of the way in which the nation constructs itself and adapts to modernization. In the following section a number of examples are provided that demonstrate Vaid's engagement with tradition, through Bimal's reflections on the roles of his mother and father and the 'gift' of inheritance.

The following excerpt is taken from *BCFQ*:

> Despite jerking his head Bimal can't help thinking about his mother and father for some time.
>
> When the memory of the beloved comes then it cannot be left aside. If there is a crack in the mirror it cannot be fixed. The thought of them. Listen, Bimal hasn't returned yet. So what shall I do? Who knows what has happened to this boy. His mind has become corrupted. The poor thing has become dry. You should give him almond essence to drink everyday. He should be taken to see a doctor. Dear son who is in the bloom of youth. He is slipping out of our hands. What is the use of regret? We should ask some Mahatma for treatment. I warn you, if you do so. But in the end we must do something. So I am saying that we should arrange his marriage, our young and dear son. Yes, yes arrange his marriage. He is a blot on the family. What else does he want? Alas, definitely someone has done something to him. A spell. You are a fool. He is a good for nothing. Aren't you ashamed insulting our dearest son this way? If it's in my control then... If its in your control then you'll shoot everyone. If not then what else would I do? Good for nothing child. Don't say more. You too stop raving on. Be patient. Go to *Pahāṛī Dhīraj*[32]. Mother, I/we will prove something, now I/we have awoken. So do something son. Bless me/us. You will succeed. Go. If I/we were to go, then where would I/we go? There is deep darkness all around. I am shoed at every door, Prabhu ji, don't obsess about my faults. *Karman ki gat nyārī*. Prove it. A Kabir saying. *Humāyun. Badāyun. Fāni Badāyūnī*. After all, he is just a child. He is of tender age. He is wicked. You should consider your mother and father's honour. If he runs away from the house then...

[32] This is a very specific cultural and physical reference and a play on words with the previous sentence. It will be explained in detail in the analysis that follows.

> Then let him run away. If he takes poison...Let him. Alas alas. He's just a small child. Okay, now stop pestering me. (Vaid 1999a, 366)

This excerpt provides particularly rich material for the current analysis as it functions on two main levels. It reflects the tension the mother and father feel regarding Bimal's perceived hoplessness and how best to 'heal' him, but can also be read as a discussion between Mother India personified, and India's younger generation. Both of these aspects will be considered in the following paragraphs.

The parents' representation of Bimal as hopeless are discussed in terms of Bimal being corrupted, unmarried and needing treatment. There is no sense in the way the parents describe him of his malaise being part of a broader set of issues facing the nation, as reflected in their son. What we can see is that Bimal acutely feels the weight of traditions and inheritance and construes them as having a debilitating and negative effect on moving him, or the nation, forward in productive ways.

The reader will recall that in the previous chapter where masturbation was discussed, references to masturbation were intermixed with references to the burden of tradition and that Bimal was unable to free himself from his mother and father. It was noted then, that part of his explicit characterization was 'beleaguered by his mother and father', *apne māṁ bāp se ākrānt Bimal.* In the context of that discussion traditional approaches to the construction of virility and manhood, and how masturbation was used to confront these ideas were of concern. The excerpt now being discussed with regard to nationalism, follows chronologically (in terms of the flow of the text) from that point. After reflecting on traditions, Bimal's thinking shifts to memories of his mother and father, and despite physically jerking his head, he cannot escape thinking about them:

> *Sir jhaṭakne ke bāvjūd Bimal kuch der ke lie apne māṁ bāp ke bare meṁ socte rahne par mazbūr ho jātā hai.*
>
> *Jā nahīṁ saktā kabhī unkā khyāl āyā huā. śīśe meṁ bāl āyā huā.*
>
> Despite jerking his head, Bimal can't help thinking about his mother and father for some time.
>
> When the memory of the beloved comes it cannot be left aside. If there is a crack in the mirror it cannot be fixed.

These sentences are used to indicate a narrative shift, and establish the scene where Bimal recounts a conversation between his mother and father. The line *jā nahīṁ saktā kabhī unkā khyāl āyā huā. śīśe meṁ bāl āyā huā* is a fragment of a very

popular movie song from the film *Village Girl* (1945), sung by the famous singer Noorjehan (1926-2000), and refers in this case to the idea of the inescapability of the memory of Bimal's parents. The relevance of this is that as we have seen in other examples, Vaid uses intertextuality in contexts which deconstruct the original meaning of the textual fragment. In the context of a discussion on nationalism, it is important to note that Hindi film songs had enormous currency in the post-independence period in terms of rousing national sentiment. Many of the songs Vaid uses were major hits in the post-independence period, and had significant cultural currency. In this case, Vaid removes the song fragment from its original context and places it in the context of critiquing the role and attitudes of the older generation. The significance of the line thus switches from referring to the pain of memory based on love and separation, to the pain of memory in terms of the inescapable, negative emotions generated by flashbacks of his parents.

Let us now focus on the construction of the mother in the text, and how the characterization of the mother is consistent with broader academic discussions regarding the values women reflected in the nationalist environment, as the keepers of Indian spirituality, the 'inner' world and gate-keepers of Indian 'authenticity'. In the example provided above, Bimal's mother is worried about her son and is discussing with her husband how best to help him. In all instances, the way she constructs his problems and their causes, and her suggestions for remedy, rely on a traditional Indian worldview. She suggests that he has become dry (*khuśkī*) and should be taken to see a hakīm. Dryness is associated with Unani medicine, and relates to the temperaments assigned to the humors and elements of the body (Khaleefathullah 2001, 32-33); a person in need of treatment would go to see a Unani practitioner, or *hakīm*. She also suggests he be given almond essence (*badam rogan*), which is used in traditional Indian medicine to cure a number of ills; among other things it is said to strengthen nerves, protect the heart and improve brain function (Ambika Medico). In *Passionate Modernity*, Srivastav (2007, 148-149) discusses how an aspect of the Hakīm's therapy is 'the possibility of the maintenance of 'Indian' traditions in 'threatening' environments...' and that 'the Hakim holds out the possibility of the (existential) return to the more controllable milieu of the province and the village.' This is important, as the mother in the context in which Vaid provides it, is drawing on traditional medicinal approaches and world-views in order to assist her son, who is suffering from what

the reader is experiencing in Bimal as a specifically modern malaise. Another suggestion from the mother is that Bimal should go to see a *mahātma* for treatment, which suggests a more spiritual basis for Bimal's problems. It is significant here that Vaid uses the terms *hakīm* and *mahātma*, in the same context, as *hakīms* and Unani medicine have a lineage associated with the Islamic world, whereas *mahātmas* are very much part of Sanskritic, Hindu tradition. As she clutches at any parts of 'tradition' she can think of to help Bimal she concludes that someone must have cast a spell (*jādū ṭonā*) on Bimal. The fact that Bimal is not married (and hasn't managed to get even one girlfriend yet) and that this bothers his mother was evident in the opening paragraph of the story, and is reiterated here, the idea that arranging Bimal's marriage would help. Each of these aspects creates a picture of the mother as spiritual, traditional and by definition in this context, not modern or westernized. She also repeatedly refers to Bimal as her 'young and dear' son, and as being in the bloom of his life. She is highly protective of Bimal, chiding her husband when he criticises Bimal. Here, just as significantly, Vaid (derisively) invokes 'tradition' as the cure to the 'ills' of modernity: the mother counters the son's modernist ills through ancient therapy, a strategy of dealing with the present that Vaid might suggest to be characteristic of tendencies within Indian intelligentsia in general.

The examples I have provided which all form part of the construction of the mother as 'traditional', create a picture of the role of the mother that is consistent with Partha Chatterjee's framework:

> The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility for protecting and nurturing this quality. (Chatterjee 1993, 126)

In a recent article Ira Raja comments on how 'the figure of the wife and the figure of the mother functioned as sites of authenticity within the family' (Raja 2004, 27). In light of the representation of Bimal's mother we have seen above, I argue that Vaid deliberately constructs the mother in his text to function as a site of authenticity, and promulgator of traditional Indian spirituality and world-views. This construction makes Bimal's reading of tradition and inheritance even more powerful as his rejection of tradition is placed in a context standing alongside dominant nationalist paradigms.

I will now consider a critical shift in the text, where Bimal's voice enters the scene:

> *Mātā, kuch karke dikhā deṁge, ab jāg uṭhe haiṁ ham. Kuch to karo beṭā. Āśīrvād do. Tumhārā kalyāṇ hogā. Jāo. Jāyeṁ to jāyeṁ kahāṁ. Cahuṁ or hai aṁdherā. pag pag ṭhokareṁ khāuṁ maiṁ prabhu jī mere auguṇ citt na dharo. Karman kī gat nyārī. Sadhu. Kahat kabīr. Humāyun. Badāyūn. Fānī Badāyūnī. Abhī ākhīr bacca hai. Umr kā kacca hai.*
>
> Mother, I/we will prove something, now I/we have awoken. So do something son. Bless me/us. You will succeed. Go. If I/we were to go, then where would I/we go? There is deep darkness all around. I am shoed at every door, Prabhu ji, don't obsess about my faults. *Karman ki gat nyārī.* Prove it. A Kabir saying. *Humāyun. Badāyun. Fāni Badāyūnī.* After all, he is just a child. He is of tender age. (Vaid 1999a, 366)

Vaid has carefully created these lines so that each line functions on two levels. Grammatically he has chosen to use the first-person plural construction, which means the subject of the sentences spoken by Bimal can be read either as either 'I', where *ham* and the correlating plural verb form is used to indicate a singular pronoun in place of *maiṁ*; or 'we', where the implied *ham* and the plural verb form denote a plural subject. This has a profound impact on the text as it means that the lines spoken by Bimal can be read as singular or plural—that is Bimal (singular) speaking to his mother but also the younger generation (as plural) speaking to their mother, where the mother then becomes Mother India herself. This creates a dramatic expansion of the text's meanings. Using a feature of Hindi grammar (which could not be achieved in the English language), Vaid creates a scene where the mother can be read to be a physical embodiment of the nation (Mother India) itself. The younger generation are thus pleading with the nation that they will achieve something, they have awoken, but they are continually rejected (shooed away from every door) and do not know where to go (*jāyeṁ to jāyeṁ kahāṁ*). The mother as the embodiment of the nation replies to the pleas with a blessing, assurance of success, and an urge to go forth.

This double meaning in which the mother comes to embody the nation is significant, as India has always been considered female and also referred to consistently as 'Mother India'. In returning briefly to Nehru's sense of India, as expressed through his speeches, we see a clear example of the nation as feminine and women as representatives of the 'real' India:

> India has always seemed to me to have broadly more the feminine qualities than the masculine...Essentially she is gentle and peaceful even though on

> occasions she may indulge in brutal and callous behaviour. That is why I think that Indian women, from whatever part of the country one may select them, represent the essence of India more, perhaps, than men. (Nehru in Dallmayr and Devy 1998, 189-190)

Furthermore, there is a link to be made between the mother as Mother India incarnate, and the role of sons in protecting her. Sumathi Ramaswamy , writing on visual practices of patriotism in the subcontinent, discusses the feminisation of India's geo-body, and the visual practice 'which borrows for the cause of national territory the qualities and properties that have been bestowed upon the woman, especially her association with all that is deemed truly and honourably 'Indian'' (Ramaswamy 2003, 180). The suggestion then is that:

> [T]he national territory...ought to be treated in the same fashion as the respectable Indian woman, with paternalistic care and protection. Just as the respectable woman, however, is ultimately under the guardianship of 'her' men, Bharat Mata's territory is under the guardianship of her loyal sons whose property it becomes according to the logic of possession of all things female in a paternalistic and patriarchal world. (Ramaswamy 2003, 180)

Ramaswamy's argument is relevant for the current analysis as the tension present in Bimal's assertions that he will do 'something', and will prove himself, is evidence of the responsibility he feels towards his mother (and Mother India). It could be suggested in this context that Bimal is presented as opposing the traditions he sees his father as upholding, but continues to regard his mother in a traditional manner. The struggle then appears as a struggle between men about women—the mother and the nation in the text as female archetypes are so inextricably linked that they become merged. Bimal is doubtful, anxious and directionless, but still asserts himself as wanting to do something, giving the sense that he is aware of his role as guardian of Bharat Mata's territory, but doesn't know how to move forward. This stands in contrast to his relationship with the father which will be discussed in detail below.

The lines in the text I discuss here are also rich with references to a wide variety of cultural contexts, thereby furthering the impact of the text as a commentary on the nation and nationalism. Bimal's line *jāyeṁ to jāyeṁ kahāṁ* (If

We were to go, where would We go?) forms the title for his novel *Bimal Urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ*, which as I mentioned earlier was the development of the trilogy of Bimal stories in novel form, and has been highly controversial. *Jāyeṁ to jāyeṁ kahāṁ* is the name of a hit song from 1954 film *Taxi Driver*. The lines *Cahuṁ or hai aṁdherā* and *pag pag ṭhokareṁ khāuṁ maiṁ prabhu jī mere auguṇ citt na dharo* (there is deep darkness all around. I am shooed at every door, Prabhu ji, don't obsess about my faults) is also an instance of embedded text, since it featured in the film *Kangan* (1959), and is a line from a Hindi bhajan. *Karman gi gat nyārī* is also a famous bhajan and featured as a song in the 1949 film *Veer Ghatotkach*. What is important about these examples is that Vaid uses them to tap into the religio-national imagination, thereby implicitly gesturing at the complexities of the putative modernity of postcolonial modernity. Hindi film songs had (and still have) significant cultural currency in India, so the fact that Vaid uses them in this context has a powerful effect on the text and the allegory of the nation.[33]

Having looked at the construction of the mother in the fiction, let us move on to the father figure. The father is presented in the above example as much more aggressive than the mother, and is much less tolerant of Bimal's perceived transgressions. He describes his son as a good for nothing (*harāmkhor*, and *nāmurād aulād*), and calls his wife a fool (*tum bevkūf ho*); he also warns his wife against seeking a mahatma for treatment. In the following example the father talks about passing on traditions and responsibility to the younger generation. However, there is clear evidence that Bimal's memory has intruded on the narrative. What the father says is more indicative of the debilitating effect the burden of tradition has on Bimal's thinking, than it is of the father's attitudes.

> *Ādmī ke sāmne koī uddeśy honā cāhie, beṭā! Is tarah mare mare mat phiro. Phirte phirte mare jāoge. Saṛak pār karne se pahle donoṁ taraf dekh lenā cāhie, beṭā. Baṛoṁ kī nasīhat. Khud miyāṁ fazīhat. Āpko nasīhat karne kā koī adhikār nahīṁ. Hamārā vaqt bīt gayā. Ab ham jald hī parlok sidhār jāyeṁge. Ham sārā rājpāṭ tumheṁ sauṁpte haiṁ beṭā! Galī saṛī lāśoṁ kā yah ambār, tumheṁ sauṁpte haiṁ. Girī bhurī dīvāroṁ ke is sāre malbe ke tumhīṁ mālik ho, beṭā. Jug jug jio jahāṁ meṁ māṁ ke jāe. Ham ab jā rahe haiṁ. bhagvān tumhārī rakṣā kareṁge ki vahī hamāre deś ke rakṣā mantrī haiṁ, beṭā! Beṭā! Beṭā...*
>
> There should be some purpose facing a man, son! Don't wander about this way. You will be lost from wandering about. Crossing the street, look both ways, son!

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[33] Vaid's texts are littered with intertextual references; identifying them all is outside the scope of this project. I have identified only a sample of them in instances where they are relevant to my analysis.

> The elders who give advice, do not take it themselves. You have no right to lead us. Our opportunity has passed. Now we will swiftly be departing for the next world. We are handing over the whole kingdom to you, son! This pile of rotting, decaying corpses, we are handing over to you. Just you are the master of all of the collapsing walls of all of this rubble, son. Long live in this world, O the worthy son of your mother. We are departing now. God will look after you because he is the defence minister of our country, son, son, son. (Vaid 1999a, 366-67)

The father urges his son to find purpose in life, wandering about will not achieve anything. This reference to Bimal's wandering about is consistent with the characterization we have seen throughout the text of Bimal as aimless, wretched, incurable and restless. What follows this introduction to the father's discourse is an insertion of Bimal's own narrative outlining his view of elders:

> *Baṛoṁ kī nasīhat. Khud miyāṁ fazīhat*[34]*. Āpko nasīhat karne kā koī adhikār nahīṁ.*
>
> The elders give advice that they don't take themselves. You have no right to advise us.

This is one example of Bimal's thinking intruding on the text and sets up whatever the father might have to say to be unreliable and negative in effect. Following this narrative intrusion, we are quickly returned to the father, who wants to hand over his traditions and responsibilities to his son. In the lines that follow however, the traditions and responsibilities are all caste extremely negatively. Inheritance is likened to a pile of rotting, decaying corpses, and Bimal is bequeathed a pile of rubble. In this context Bimal's memory is put forward as a traumatic one, and the father figure has a ghostly, haunting presence.

In addition to the imagery of the inheritance being likened to a pile of corpses, Vaid includes the religious imagery of *parlok* (the next world) and *Bhagvān* (God), with a play on *rakṣā karnā* (to protect), and *rakṣā mantrī* (defence minister). Here, he confronts the role of religion in post-Independence politics. Though this unfolds through a humourous play on words, the intent is deadly serious: to offer a criticism of the status of India as a secular nation-state. The father then is characterized as representative of a generation of elders who are hypocritical, not sincere in their secularism and forcibly burdening the younger generation with traditions and responsibilities that are not useful to them.

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[34] This is an Urdu idiom, which I have not translated literally, the literal translation would be: *baṛoṁ kī nasīhat*=The advice of elders; *Khud miyāṁ fazīhat*=the gentlemen themselves are the disgrace.

An excerpt from *Ek thā Bimal* (A Man Called Bimal), the third story in the Bimal trilogy, is particularly rich in terms of constructing the father (or ghost of the father) as having a negative and debilitating influence on Bimal's psyche. It is also particularly pertinent to the argument, as we see Bimal engaging with his memories of his father and the paralysing effect the burden of a (negative) tradition has on him.

> Vast barren earth. Whirlwinds of memories are flying. This is the beehive of the honeybees. You are worthless. Whose was this voice! Whose allegation was this! The tobacco stained, miles-long moustache from which drops of blood are dripping, and two big glaring eyes which are his father's which are gushing blood, the yellowness of the miles long moustaches in which he is becoming absorbed. It is as if the seeds of blood are being sown in the barren earth.
>
> The length of the miles and the yellowness of the moustache keeps increasing and the brightness of the blood is stinging the darkness of the house and the stomach of darkness is vomiting corpses: corpses. A rotting, stinking, heap of unsatisfied ambitions and unfulfilled urges. And the blast of the stench is enough to summon all the vultures of the world. Celebrate. The treasury given to us from our forefathers, the treasury of inheritance. gift of the ages, eternally laid out wealth of the centuries. And the mile- long moustaches whose yellowness keeps on being bloodied protecting the pile of all of those corpses.
>
> Hereditary moustaches, honour of the house. The future is thorns of points of view haunted by a ghostly past, those miles long moustaches are crying tears of blood protecting that splendid pile of decaying rubbish, they are moaning: you are worthless, you will never be anything, you won't make anything of yourself, you won't produce anything, not even a moustache, you are worthless, you are an oozing blemish on the family name ... In the dense cover of those mile-long moustaches there is a snarling wound. And those big glaring eyes become focused on a spot of burning blood. And then there is a scream which is of his mother: devoid of resistance, devoid of dissatisfaction, silenced, plagued by the need for approval, perseverance-ridden, afflicted by torture. In that snarling sore hidden in that miles-long moustache and in that scream is a dreadful war and that scream, having given birth to rather a smaller scream, is defeated.
>
> Now that small helpless scream plays with the moustache, as if attempting to arrange its deformed, sore-ridden shape. Moustache like thorns. The wound won't heal. The deformation is a pointed stone penetrating into the moustache.
>
> And now his moustache is beginning to appear. And the miles of inheritance and a centre of the future miles as a growling sore will grow worse day by day, and one day in him, and in his ancestral wound, there will be no difference and the responsibility of protecting the pile of those corpses!...
>
> ...Having fled from that wounded lion, from that miles-long moustache, from that rotting pile of corpses without making any kind of compromise, and having stayed away from the reach of the stench, you must do something. The punishment of doing something. Not bleating. Without having accepted defeat, without having blamed anyone, with complete independence.
>
> I don't have the desire to do anything. I have become numb from years of carpet thorns. ... No matter what, in order to burn that pile of corpses, I am compelled to do something.

Escape from that stench is impossible. In order to bow the knees in front of that wounded lion it is true, I must do something: that lion who even now is snarling, lying beside the pile of those rotting corpses, and whose eyes are two bleeding holes, into which his old and angry soul peers fixedly towards that door...

He will quickly stand up straight, and his feet will be firmly fixed and the storm and the darkness will not be able to uproot him and even the constricting desire to go back will die and the distance between him and that pile will become so much greater that the blast of that stench will not be able to reach him and the vultures' gloomy presence will be forever lifted from his head. At that moment, the concern about that dying lion will be over. The scratching of the memory of that gradually dimming moon will be finished...

Life. Duty. Destiny. The shower of whips. Leaping over gulfs of uncertainty, piercing through the mist of blind ambitions. He falls time and again colliding with the fleeting peaks of imaginary achievements and genuine failures, over and over he rises above. Having taken a momentary rest in the shelter of friendship and love and dreams...then he encounters with different kinds of possibilities which demand the fine details of his courage; and courage has become the splendour of that inherited pile.

Dragging his legs along dejectedly, he returns again towards that pile. As though some corpse might be going towards the grave, as if the blast of some bad smell were returning towards its source, as though some lost, derailed vision may have pulled itself together over the right path. And the guardian of that pile, that dying lion, welcomes him with a strange smile. His snarl breaks and the clouds of his supplication begin to dissappear, being anything is preferable to being nothing...in no time at all, the pile of corpses is turned into the tomb of fine skill and knowledge. The voices of the tomb are resounding in his ears and he takes a blessing and goes on his way in search of a job. Having become free from the memory of his hostile beliefs he becomes lost in thought on earning wages. The moustaches of the lion start dancing in the exhilaration of the victory. He doesn't like that dancing.

Red tape and mounds of files. It seemed to him as if he might be being buried alive. Each file-like brick is tied up with red tape and in them worms of words are crawling. We regret to inform you that, we are glad to inform you, that your leave is not approved and your case is under consideration and that you have been selected unanimously and you can come seated in a broken chair in front of the big bureaucrat's office, waiting as long as you want...

Worn out broken people are crawling over the streets day and night like ants. The massacre of smiles and melodious voices is grabbing and gobbling up originality and the snakes of red tape are slithering across the mountains of files. Apparitions of the future on their faces. The fear of being fired from their work is stamped on their inner soul. The futile bureaucratic language has sucked the wariness of the hands and bundles of small worries are tied on their shoulders...

The inherited pile of corpses left by his forefathers and that dying lion, the protector of that pile, the memory of the blessing which is a dagger in his back...

The tomb of ancestral charisma begins to resound with warnings and preachings. The protector of the pile starts whispering again and his gaze penetrates into that pile like a lance!...

And now in front of him there is a smallish garden of questions, his own, smallish. He will care for it. He will water the questions, he will wait for answers. Without going back to the past, without rushing towards the future, with perseverance, with self-control, searching for some appropriate weapon, not caring about that wounded lion, shaking off the burden of the pile of corpses. (Vaid 1999a, 385-390)

I emphasize again the intrusion into the narrative of Bimal's memory. In this context, although I refer to him as 'the father', it is more accurate to consider him 'the father's ghost', as the descriptions are haunting and ghostly in style. Bimal's contribution to the narrative further confirms the haunting, paralysing effect of his father's ghost on his psyche.

In the following detail of the excerpt we see evidence of the very dim view that Bimal's father holds of him. The father repeatedly characterizes Bimal as worthless (*tum nikamme ho*) and as someone who will never be anything; won't make anything of himself; won't produce anything (not even a moustache); and is an oozing blemish on the family name. These are explicit characterizations evidenced in the following lines:

> *tum nikamme ho, tumse kuch nahīṁ hogā, tum kuch nahīṁ banoge, tum meṁ se kuch bhī nahīṁ upjegā, mūṁceṁ bhī nahīṁ, tum tum nikamme ho, tum khāndān ke māthe par ek ristā huā kalaṅkho.*
>
> You are worthless, you will never be anything, you won't make anything of yourself, you won't produce anything, not even a moustache, you are worthless, you are an oozing blemish on the family name. (Vaid 1999a, 386)

The above text is one of the finest examples of the way Vaid confronts the idea of Indian tradition as being a debilitating burden on the younger generation. The father figure is the object of some of his harshest criticism, and all that the father represents in terms of protecting the rotting, stinking corpses that constitute forbears and tradition. Let us look in turn at how Bimal characterizes the father; how the traditions the father protects are described; and how Bimal himself responds (or is unable to respond) to the pressure and influence of his forbears. The mother figure also makes another appearance, which further illustrates points made previously, but in this case shows the mother as afflicted, and tortured by her husband, a state which eats away at Bimal's conscience. I provide an extended discussion of the way Vaid presents forbears (specifically the father figure) in this context in order to demonstrate the way Vaid has provoked criticism as someone who has attacked the foundations of Indian national and social thought.

The following offers an account of some of the imagery Vaid uses in the text in order to negatively construct the father. The father is characterized by: a yellow, extremely long (and ever-increasing), tobacco stained, moustache dripping with blood (*Tambākū kī zardī meṁ racī huī mīloṁ lambī muṁceṁ jinse khūn ke qatre*

ṭapak rahe haiṁ); a snarling wound covered by the dense moustache (*un mīloṁ lambī muṁchoṁ ke ghane sāye meṁ ek gurratā huā ghāv*); and glaring eyes gushing blood (*do damaktī huī baṛī baṛī āṁkoṁ jo uske pita kī hai jinse khūn phūṭ rahā hai*). A link is established in the text between the father and traditions. As noted above, the father is seen as protecting traditions and trying to force them onto Bimal, as the heir. In the text the traditions the father is seen to be protecting are described as rotting, stinking; decaying rubbish; inescapable stench; the stomach of the house vomits corpses. Tradition is maintained by the father's moustache, the blood from which serves to protect the pile of corpses which become a tomb of fine skill and knowledge. This 'blessing' (of being bestowed with a pile of corpses) is described as a dagger in Bimal's back.

Returning to the characterization of the mother, in this text Bimal characterizes her as a faded moon, devoid of resistance, needing approval, perseverence ridden, and afflicted by torture. Gradually her screams fade, and soon this memory of her (the moon/mother) will be extinguished. This characterization furthers Vaid's construction of the debilitating influence of the father figure: not only does he vanquish the hopes of the son (in effect, that of a genuinely new India) but also embodies gender oppression. The father is the oppressive nation personified.

The culture critic Geeta Kapur (2001) has discussed how the burden of tradition rests uneasily on the shoulders of the Indian intelligentsia. In the text above, Vaid provides graphic examples of the ambivalence Bimal experiences as part of the intelligentsia, but also outside it, and towards tradition and what it represents in post-independence, national conscience. Bimal is, of course, explicitly positioned as part of the intelligentsia on the basis of his connection with coffeehouse culture, and his characterization as a frustrated, existentially challenged writer. The questions the text raises are examples of the difficult relationship with tradition that Kapur describes:

> Historically invented in the process of decolonization, tradition is governed in each case by a national ideology that emphasizes difference; national tradition becomes a significantly variegated sign to merit close and special attention. Once independence has been gained nationalism itself poses ontological questions: what is at stake in being Indian? And though the

> question may easily devolve into rhetoric, there is a burden of it that rests on a particularly fraught class and its individuals. This is the urban middle-class intelligentsia, which includes artists. (Kapur, 2001:277)

In the above section, consideration was given as to how Vaid constructs the mother and father figures as representative of some of the internal struggles Bimal faces in reconciling (or not) the role of Indian 'tradition' in the modern Indian context. As has been made clear, he uses confrontation and attack to challenge normative discourse regarding the role of ancestors in the modernizing nation. What we see is that, rather than learning lessons from the traditions which his mother and father espouse, or finding solace in any kind of spiritual essence of 'India', Bimal constructs the parental figures, and the traditions they uphold, as constituting a large part of the problem itself.

The idea of tradition as a burden and linked with death and corpses is also demonstrated in Vaid's much more abstract piece *Uske Bayān*. Section seven of the novella, *Uskā Qabristān* (His Burial ground) is utilised here, to supplement the analysis regarding the burden of tradition. One of the features of the text is that it is highly abstract and the voices which are heard are never identified explicitly. They can be read as either an interior monologue of the expatriate artist, or the memory of the voices of his contemporaries. As this is the first time *Uske Bayān* has been used to supplement my analysis, there are a number of introductory remarks which need to be made about the nature of the text. In the introduction to *Uske Bayān*, Vaid describes the text as:

> *Ye bayān uske haiṁ, usī ke haiṁ.*
>
> *Har bayān ke ant meṁ bāhār se jo ek aur avāz sunāyī de jātī hai vah bhī vāstav meṁ usī kī hai.*
>
> *Vah ek pakā huā pravāsī but tarāś hai aur ek muddat se mere maun aur aṁdhere meṁ samādhisth baithā hai.*
>
> *Ye bayān uskī samādhi ko bhang bhī karte haiṁ aur use aur gehrāī bhī dete haiṁ.*
>
> *Yey bayān bhī haiṁ aur antarātmālāp bhī.*
>
> These are testimonies of him/that, of just him/that. At the very end of every testimony, where another voice can be heard from the outside, even that, in reality, is his/that.
>
> He/she/that is a staunch expatriate sculptor and has for a long time sat in absorbed meditation in my silence and darkness.
>
> These testimonies break his samādhi and give him more depth.
>
> These are both testimonies, and a conversation of the soul. (Vaid 1999b, 67)

Excerpts from *Uske Bayān* are discussed in this chapter regarding nation and its 'children' as they provide a great deal of rich material regarding artistic representation of the broader issues which are central to a discussion of Vaid's construction of the nation. In translating these accounts where the abstract noun is referred to, 'N' is used, i.e. he/that. In the following excerpt we see a development of the idea of tradition discussed above:

> 'N' says there once was a time when this burial ground must have seemed to some others apart from me like an ugly and stinking field full of shrubs and small heaps instead of a burial ground and my own wish used to be that I would stay far away from this. (Vaid 1999b, 90)
>
> 'N' says when I do my rounds here my glance stays on the dead bodies buried inside these graves and the life of those dead bodies and pertaining to them my own dejections and failures and also on the beauty of these graves but, N says, now I want that having forgotten all of those corpses I might increase the beauty of these graves with my excellence to such a degree that no one would know whether this was a burial ground or my temple.
>
> 'N' says now I feel no fear, no scratch pulling from the idea of those corpses but sometimes in some weakness I come and offer stones or flowers to some very special graves. For the past few days, 'N' says, another desire is arising that I should erect a separate statue at the head of each tomb according to the position and status of it. But, N says, my hand has not yet leapt out like a sledgehammer and I am waiting for that leap. (Vaid 1999b, 91)

There is a strong link in *Uskā Qabristān* between the burial ground and traditions, ancestors and artistic forbears. The idea of the burial ground as a metaphor for traditions and as somewhere which is repulsive and stinking is reminiscent of the references to the rotting pile of corpses of *Ek Thā Bimal*. In this sample, however there is an engagement with the traditions/dead bodies, which we did not see in *Ek Thā Bimal*. A connection is made between the dead bodies and the sculptors own failures. In a way which was not evident in *Ek Thā Bimal*, the sculptor engages with the traditions, and suggests that he will in some way positively contribute to them:

> *Kahtā hai, ab cāhtā yah hūṁ ki un tamām lāśoṁ ko bhūlkar in qaroṁ kī khūbsūratī meṁ apne kamāl se aise aise izāfe kar dūṁ ki kisī ko mālum tak na ho ki yah merā qabristān hai yā merā butkadā*
>
> 'N' says now I want that having forgotten all of those corpses I might increase the beauty of these graves with my excellence to such a degree that no one would know whether this was a burial ground or my temple. (Vaid 1999b, 91)

The use if the word *but* is important for the analysis as it can refer both to a statue (in this case the artistic creation of the sculptor), or an idol (as in a religious idol, found in a temple). The effect this has on the text is that Vaid is discussing

simultaneously the idea that the sculptor wants to contribute to tradition in the sense of adding something meaningful, moving the artistic tradition forward, and making the graves more beautiful, but also that in doing so he might transform the burial ground into a *butqadā*. The double meaning then is that the burial ground could be turned into a temple (*butqadā* literally meaning house of idols), or a museum (*butqadā* in this context also meaning house of statues).

There is also an indication in the text that the deleterious effect of the burden of tradition has subsided somewhat (in comparison to the way it was presented in *Ek Thā Bimal*), as the sculptor now may even offer flowers to the most special graves. However, the reconciliation with tradition is still incomplete, as he is still waiting for the day when he might erect a separate statue for each tomb.

In terms of the main argument of the thesis, *Uskā Qabristān* confirms and extends the analysis of tradition and nation in showing the deep engagement in Vaid's texts with the influence of forbears on contemporary artistic production. This offers a manner of dealing with the issue of how best to incorporate the modern with the traditional. Questions from both *Ek Thā Bimal* and *Uskā Qabristān* are raised such as: How does the modern artist engage with tradition? What role do ancestors and forbears have in terms of dictating the nature of the engagement? Do the traditions have a deleterious effect on the production of original work? What the analysis has shown is that although the texts attack and confront existing ideas regarding the nature of tradition and the extent to which they influence ideas of the contemporary, they also offer a deep engagement with the relationship between tradition and modernity.

Fundamental Questions and the State of the Nation

In the trilogy of Bimal stories, Vaid raises many questions which face the postcolonial Indian nation, from the leadership of the country and the poverty of the masses to the language issues which came to prominence in the Nehruvian period. The analysis that follows suggests that while each of these problems is representative of the many and varied questions facing the nation, they are symptomatic of a much larger and more insoluble situation as experienced by Bimal. That is to say, the life of the postcolonial subject can not be reduced to that of the nation. In this context the main protagonist (Bimal) does not find meaning in

the predominating discourse among his contemporaries. The resulting disconnect in Bimal surfaces as boredom, hopelessness, terror and despair. He is left with significant questions, many of which remain in the recesses of his mind and which are ungraspable and insoluble by nature. The literary effect Vaid creates is that there is one set of questions being discussed by coffeehouse intellectuals, and the leaders of the nation, but these do not correlate with the fundamental questions. Some of the problems facing the nation as discussed in the coffeehouse are considered below followed by the nature of fundamental questions as Bimal construes them. Ultimately the reader is presented with a stalemate. The narrative presents deep suspicions regarding normative discourse of the nation and nationalism, but solutions are absent. Furthermore, sarcasm and wit are used to deeply criticise the existing discourse.

In the following excerpt Bimal is listening to a conversation among his contemporaries regarding postcolonial Indian politics:

> Congress, in the end, are a group of capitalists.
>
> No doubt, no doubt.
>
> But, in the end, even capitalists are human.
>
> Does that mean we are all beasts?
>
> That's what we call a quick wit.
>
> I am saying that if capitalism were to end in this world, then say...
>
> Will you add anything?
>
> What difference is there between saying something and not saying something?
>
> In that case be quiet.
>
> Do you make a joke of everything?
>
> Socialists don't have any faith or integrity.
>
> Leave them aside for now, they don't have any plan for the country's problems.
>
> The question arises: who has a solution?
>
> If anyone has a solution then tell me the bastard's name and address. Right now, this minute.
>
> Inopportune joke!
>
> J P[35] became a mahatma.
>
> That's good.
>
> Actually, I am saying that if there was any man equal to Nehru in the whole country, then it was definitely him.
>
> But what can one man do?

[35] This is a reference to Jayaprakash Narayan, which I discuss in the analysis that follows.

So what if it's a man, one woman can't do anything either. Haven't you heard one and one are not two, but eleven.[36]

History is the witness of this matter that...

For a long time Bimal stayed listening to this long and spurious testimony of history, and then when his attention returns the second time...

So I was saying that the communists have now been exposed.

That has been exposed several times.

The bastards are crooks!

They squander Russian money.

They sing her praises.

Whoever has the money, his is the buffalo.

It's not a buffalo, it's a threat.

There is just one issue.

'Money makes the mare go.'

You bastard, you think you are a great scholar of English.

English is our own tongue.

Your father's?

What do you think, you bastard, (for several years) I have been preparing for the I.A.S.

Even your father couldn't get into the I.A.S.

Leave my father out of this.

I'll leave him out.

Mate, would you both let me talk fixed on one issue or not?

No.

Think about it: the future of the country is in your hands[37].

Our hands are empty.

You are the descendants of Alexander[38].

And you of monkeys.

These are all carefree people. Bimal thinks. A sign of being carefree is being able to talk nonsense (or being able to listen to it). Maybe that's why I come here every day. Maybe I am addicted to listening to nonsense. (Vaid 1999a, 361-363)

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[36] In the Hindi original, the sentence is *sunā nahīṁ, ek ek aur do gyārah*, meaning, 'haven't you heard, one one and two is eleven'. The standard Hindi expression referred to here is: *ek aur ek gyārah hote haiṁ*, which in standard usage means that if two people have a similar ideology, then their sum is not 1+1=2, but 1 and 1=11. The presence of the word *do* (two) in Vaid's construction refers to another idiom in Hindi, *nau do gyārah honā*, literally 9+2 equals 11, which means 'to disappear into thin air'. The inference here, being that the JP movement came and went with no lasting effect.

[37] This is a comic reference, which refers to graffiti seen in men's urinals: *āp kā bhaviṣya āp ke hāthon meṁ hai*, 'your future is in your hands', and in its original context has obvious connotations referring to providing progeny for the nation.

[38] The two sentences in Hindi are *hamāre hath khālī haiṁ. tum sikander kī aulād ho*, 'Our hands are empty. You are the descendents of Alexander,' and refers the reader to the proverb: *Sikander kālī hāth āyā thā aur kālī hāth gayā*. 'Alexander came with empty hands and left empty handed'.

The above text refers directly to the tension in the postcolonial Indian political climate regarding which political model India should follow. The influence of capitalism, socialism and communism are referred to directly. The idea that capitalism was regarded with suspicion, and that the Soviet Union and Japan offered possible alternatives, has been discussed by Guha in *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy:*

> If India had to be industrialized, which model should it follow? To the leaders of the national movement, 'imperialism' and 'capitalism' were both dirty words. (Guha 2007, 204)

Vaid makes fun of communists and socialists as corrupt, and presents the idea that none of the major political ideologies have any solutions for India. The socialists are deemed to have no faith or integrity (*sośalisṭoṁ kā koī dīn imān nahīṁ*) and the communists are bastards of bad character (*sāle badmāś hai*). Vaid uses wit and sarcasm in his construction of the communist model using a corruption of a standard Hindi expression to make his point. The phrase used in the text is *jiskā paisa uskī bhaiṁs* which literally means, 'whoever has the money, his is the buffalo'. Vaid has adapted the standard Hindi idiom, *jiskī lāṭhī uskī bhaiṁs*, 'whoever has the club, his is the buffalo' which approximates the English expression 'might is power.' Russian money and corruption are put forward as major drivers of communist ideology in the Indian context. Further, this is followed by a fragment of English in Devanagari script, 'money makes the mare go,' which seems to be a reference from satirist John Wolcot (1738-1819) in *Ode to Pittsburgh*, the original being 'it is money makes the mare to trot', referring to the corrupting influence of money. The coffeehouse patrons chide their colleague for using this English expression saying 'you bastard, you think you are a great scholar of English,' which presents an opportunity for Vaid to comment on the role of English and the Indian Administrative Service (I.A.S.) The language issues in postcolonial India, with regard to the roles of Hindi, Urdu and English will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter. It is sufficient here to note how Vaid skilfully uses his command of English expressions and literature to both comment on the corrupting influence of money, and refer the reader to the humour of situation where both the Hindi and English expression refer to trying to shift obstinate animals! Furthermore, he uses the English expression as a transition into comments on the

role of English as the language required for admission into the Indian Administrative Service.

Later in the story there is further criticism of the communist model in the Indian context. The following example refers both to the Indian socio-political milieu and communist ideology, as well as the Hindi literary environment.

> I[39] am asking, how come a labourer (or labour woman) who pounds rocks all day long doesn't have such foolish questions arising in front of him? Can you explain that? No. Go and ask a labourer (or labour woman) this, or at least ask some labourer's union. And the other is this: I am not a labourer—I am only helpless. Labouring is just another name for helplessness. Just in the form of a human. You are a bourgeois. All of your problems are bookish. And somewhat rosy too. Have them dyed dark red. Dye my scarf red. Clench the fists. Break the stones. Who destroyed the heart of the earth? We labourers did. There is the fire of hunger[40]. (Vaid 1999a, 376)

There are a number of important points to be made regarding how this segment engages with the effect socialist realism had on Hindi fiction in the postcolonial environment, and the idea that authenticity in literature is reflected by choice of subject matter rather than literary form. Vaid uses the role of the labourer as 'authentic' in the discourse which became dominant in the postcolonial literary environment with the labouring woman twice indicated through the use of brackets. This bracketing of the female labourers is significant as it points to the notion that women are deemed important subject matter in literature and refers to the fact that there was an increasing interest in Hindi fiction of the postcolonial period of bringing to light previously unheard voices, or to use the term retrospectively, subaltern voices. In this context women and labourers in the above paragraph are intentionally put forward as representatives of the preoccupation in Hindi literature with defining the authenticity of a piece of fiction through the chosen 'subject', i.e. a labourer or a woman. The idea of the labourer (or labouring woman) is placed in a communist context, with references to the colour red repeated. In the first appearance of the colour red, the protagonist is accused of being bourgeois, bookish and having a rosy (*unābī*, meaning the red of the jujube fruit, or Indian date) picture of the way things are. Vaid uses this reference to rosy to refer to Bimal's ideas as representing a diluted form of communism, which would be best assisted by being dyed dark red, i.e. by fully committing to

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[39] The 'I' in this context is Bimal.

[40] Note here that in the Hindi original the sentence is: *Bhūk āg hai*, which is the title of one of Vaid's plays, published in 1998.

communist ideology. The sentence which follows is yet another example of intertextuality, *cunnī rang de lalāriyā merā* /'dye my scarf red'. This radically changes the implications of the text as the language is that of a Hindu bhajan where the incantation to dye the scarf red refers to words of love or devotion, a woman eagerly awaiting her marriage, red being the bridal colour of Hindu tradition.

In the context of the current discussion, there is a strong link to be made between commitment to communist ideology among the intelligentsia and the fact that this was seen to indicate commitment to the nation. In the above example Bimal is criticised for not being fully committed to communist ideology and the implication in this is that he is not committed to the nation. The emphasis on communist ideology and socialist realism as an enduring literary model, even as modernism developed in the Hindi literary sphere, constitutes the 'coercive view of national commitment' discussed by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin below:

> The dangers of a national bourgeoisie using nationalism to maintain its own power demonstrates one of the principal dangers of nationalism—that it frequently takes over the hegemonic control of the imperial power, thus replicating the conditions it rises up to combat. It develops as a function of this control, a monocular and sometimes xenophobic view of identity and a coercive view of national commitment. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2006, 117)

Vaid relentlessly critiques this coercive view of national commitment by refusing to conform to the dominant paradigms among his intellectual contemporaries regarding how best to demonstrate national commitment through literature.

In the first excerpt provided above, there are direct references to both Jawaharlal Nehru and Jayaprakash Narayan (known as JP). Jayaprakash Narayan was a leader in the nationalist movement, 'former radical socialist', 'leading light in the Sarvodaya movement', and 'advocate of better relations with Pakistan' (Guha 2007, 350). JP was known, among other things, for being committed to helping rural poverty and backwardness, and for his support of Vinoba Bhave's Bhūdān movement . The Bhudān movement gained much local and international acclaim by passing over donations of land to landless labourers (Wolpert 2000, 359). This

reference is important, as Vaid refers sarcastically to the Bhūdān movement later in the text on page 368:

> *Hameṁ jī jān se deś kī paidāvār baṛhānī cāhie.*
> *(hameṁ ek bhūdān senā aur banana cāhie)*
> *Ākhir kab tak ham dūsroṁ ke ṭukṛoṁ par paleṁge?*
> *(paleṁge nahīṁ, pileṁge)*
> We should vigorously develop the yield of the country.
> (We should form a bhūdān army)
> After all, how long will we thrive on other's scraps?
> (Not thrive, be crushed by). (Vaid 1999a, 368)

As the text lists the problems facing the nation, we see Vaid not only refer to the Bhūdān movement directly, but also use a play on the verbs *palnā* (to thrive)and *pilnā* (to be crushed) to subvert the meaning. That is, the Bhūdān movement is established as being akin to surviving on other's scraps, a controversial statement in itself, and is made all the more political by suggesting that it is not *surviving* on the scraps of others, but being *crushed by* them.

There is a link to be made here between references to the Bhūdān movement, and its connection with uplifting the rural poor, and the idea which had significant credence in postcolonial India, viz., that of 'authentic' India as being located in its villages. Vaid's references to poverty, the Bhūdān movement, and JP Narayan are controversial in that he deconstructs the idea of the positive effect of the movement and suggests, rather, that it had a crushing effect on the rural masses not an uplifting one. Sethi discusses the symbolism of the village:

> Within the double discourse of colonialism that was both hegemonizing and modernizing, the village was India's answer to the domination by the West. It symbolized indigenous cultural standards as well as the 'ancient' that could stand up to the modern...The enduring quality of the Indian village was believed to be largely the result of an amazing degree of internal tenacity that resisted any external crisis. (Sethi 1997, 957; see also Nandy 2001)

In the context of Hindi literature this meant there was an emphasis on representing the 'reality' of village life through fiction. Village life and the rural poor who inhabited the villages were used repeatedly in the national imagination

in the post-independence period, to reflect the unchanging, 'real' India. The result of this in Hindi literature was that literature which could be seen to capture this 'real India' was regarded as authentic and socially useful. Poverty and village India have certainly featured prominently in Vaid's fiction, but what is evident is a critique of the nature of the discourse, rather than any attempt to conform to ideas that there is a link between authenticity, 'Indianness', and representation of the rural poor. Furthermore Vaid critiques the way in which the issues of poverty, famine, flood and the majority population (i.e. the rural poor) are being discussed by leaders and the intelligentsia.

There are many examples where the leadership and intelligentsia are critiqued by Vaid as being unproductive in a time where major problems face the nation. The following example is also from BCFQ:

> The plight of the country...
> (it is very bad, it is very bad, now what will happen?)
> The country faces lots of big issues.
> (Don't boast)
> There are mountains of questions
> (pick up your tools/raise arms)
> For example the question of the intellectual level of the country.
> (When we excavated the mountain a feeble mouse came out)
> Needless to say that this level is very low.
> (Obliterate the distinction between high and low)
> The intellectual class of the country...
> (Don't spread false rumours)
> This class...
> Didn't I tell you we don't have such a class here?
> This class...
> (Create a classless society)
> The population of the country relies on leadership from this class.
> (Explain that to the population). (Vaid 1999a, 369-370)

In this example we see Vaid deeply critical of the intellectual Indian classes. Importantly with regard to the main argument of this thesis, this can be seen to have an isolating effect. That is, Vaid is criticising his contemporaries, and the people who read his literature. The reader, who in most instances in the case of Vaid's readership, would come from the intellectual classes he refers to here, is left

with the strong message that they are incompetent and unable to achieve any real progress with regard to the national agenda. Vaid's criticism of his contemporaries is relentless in its confrontational method, questioning, and irony.

The narrative regarding the problems faced by the nation as they are presented in coffeehouse conversations is deeply imbued by a deep suspicion of the secular nationalism which characterized the Nehruvian period. There are also numerous points where Vaid refers, either directly or indirectly, to religious nationalism in postcolonial India. In the following text from BCFQ we see Vaid sarcastically and implicitly weave what is presented as the fatalistic thinking of Hinduism into discussion about the poverty, famine and flooding that India witnessed in the postcolonial period:

> *Deś kī unāsī fasīdī jantā ko donoṁ vaqt kā khānā tak nasīb nahīṁ hotā.*
> *(nasīb jalī jantā!)*
> *har āye sāl hamāre deś meṁ akāl paṛtā hai*
> *(yah duniyā ākhir fānī hai)*
> *garīb aur garībhotā hai, amīr aur amīr.*
> *(dhan daulat ānī jānī hai)*
> 79% of the population do not have enough food for two meals a day.
> (Unfortunate population!)
> Every other year our country is in famine.
> (Let's see what happens in the future)
> Every other year there are floods in our country.
> (This world is after all transitory)
> The poor are becoming poorer, the rich richer.
> (Riches come and go). (Vaid 1999a, 368)

Vaid uses concrete examples of the problems facing the nation, followed in brackets are a number of statements which attack fatalistic thinking. In the first pair, Vaid uses a play on the word *nasīb*. In the first sentence he uses *nasīb honā*, meaning 'to fall to the lot of', to be destined (for); and follows it in the commentary by using *nasīb jalā*, which is an adjective meaning burnt, doomed by fate, unlucky. *Nasīb* as a noun, means destiny, fate, fortune (McGregor 1993, 547). The text is set up to discuss the very real problem of poverty and food shortage in the population, but followed by 'unfortunate population', literally 'people burnt by fate' to indicate that no one is doing anything productive about the problem and it is considered a

problem of fate, not politics. In terms of the context of India's poverty in the Nehruvian period, as a political problem, Wolpert states:

> Nehru and Congress had long recognized poverty as the most critical and urgent problem confronting India's populace. Now that the British were gone, they could no longer defer tackling that national tragedy simply by shifting the burden of its blame to foreign shoulders...The average 'free' Indian [thus] remained one of the world's most poorly nourished human beings, lacking protein as well as vitamins in his daily diet of gruel... (Wolpert 2000, 358)

Returning to the excerpt from Vaid's literature, in the second example of Vaid's use of a statement followed by a bracketed response, the problem is that every other year the country is in famine, to which the bracketed response is to look to the future, not to deal with the problems as they appear in the present. In the third pair, the problem is that there are floods every second year, the response being that the world is after all transitory (*fānī*). In the final pair which points to the problem with wealth distribution and the rich getting richer and the poor poorer, the bracketed response is that riches come and go. In each of these pairs, we see the bracketed response refer to a highly spiritualized, amorphous solution to a tangible and debilitating problem facing the nation. I argue that Vaid intentionally sets up this discourse to refer to what his narrative construes as fatalistic, largely Hindu, thinking.

In a more direct confrontation of the role of religious nationalism in the postcolonial period the following example from *Ek Thā Bimal* demonstrates a highly confrontational use of language in the discussion of religion in politics:

> *Musībat ke samay insān hameśā bhagvān kā sahārā letā hai.*
>
> *Aur rob gāṁṭhne ke lie hindustānī insān hameśā us bhagvān ko God kah kar pukārtā hai.*
>
> *Īśvar allā tere nām.*
>
> *Baṛī painī dṛṣṭi thī sahib!*
>
> *Oh God.*
>
> In times of distress humans always rely on God for help.
>
> And in order to impress people, Indian people when they call out to that Bhagvan they call him God.
>
> Ishvar Allah your name.

> What a sharp vision that was, sahib!
> Oh God. (Vaid 1999a, 385)

There are a number of striking features of this textual sample. Firstly, in the Hindi original the word *bhagvān* in both instances is followed by a *halant*. The word *bhagvān* would not normally be followed by a *halant* in standard Hindi text. This has a significant rupturing effect on the text as it transforms bhagvān into a compound i.e. *bhag* + *vān*, *bhag* in Hindi means vulva, and -*vān* with a *halant* is used as a suffix to indicate possession. This would make the secondary meaning of the sentence 'And in order to impress people, Indian people when they call out to that mother-fucker, call him God.' In the next line, Vaid uses the bhajan song line *iśvar allā tere nām*, another example of intertextuality, which was a rousing nationalist bhajan, said to be one of Gandhi's favourites for its eclectic nature incorporating *iśvar* from Hinduism and *allā* from Islam. Thus, in just a few sentences, Vaid has referred the reader to one of Gandhi's favourite rousing national tunes, referred to god (*bhagvān*) as 'mother-fucker' and also used the English word God a number of times. Vaid's acerbic wit here is both confronting, and a sharp indictment of what he presents as a ridiculous preoccupation of Indian people with calling on God in times of distress. It should also be noted here that this excerpt is reminiscent of Stephen Dedalus reflecting on the nomenclature of divinity in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, by James Joyce (1916):

> It was very big to think about everything and everywhere. Only God could do that. He tried to think what a big thought that must be; but he could only think of God. God was God's name just as his name was Stephen. DIEU was the French for God and that was God's name too; and when anyone prayed to God and said DIEU then God knew at once that it was a French person that was praying. But, though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages, still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God. (Joyce [1916] 2003, 9)

Speaking of the 'hiatus' between true secularism and nationalist tradition in India, Upadhyaya states:

> This hiatus has made it possible for the nationalist tradition in India to be closely identified with Hinduism in both its moderate and militant forms: a

> process that has encouraged the attenuation of secular values and the isolation of genuine secularists in nationalist politics. There have, thus, always been two kinds of secularists in India: those, on the one hand, for whom secularism was little more than a tool of nationalist politics, and on the other, those who thought it necessary to base both nationalism and democracy upon secular foundations—upon the separation of religion from politics. While the latter tradition was progressively marginalized, upheld by only the left-wing radicals and intellectuals, the former tradition grew increasingly hegemonic, primarily by its ability to accommodate within it Hindu political idioms in the name of 'Indianness'. (Upadhyaya 1992, 821)

Vaid's literature in this context then, is deeply critical of the role of religion in politics, and positions the text in the context of the latter category, viz., the commitment to a thoroughgoing secularism as a cornerstone of Indian modernity. Vaid makes multiple references in the text (I have used only a small sample) to the role of the Hindu political idioms that Upadhyaya (1992) refers to, only to critique them with a combination of acerbic wit and sarcasm that trains its gaze upon what Vaid perceives as the hypocracies of the postcolonial milieu, including its aesthetic and political discourses. What has emerged from the analysis above is that Vaid relentlessly challenges the normative discourse of the time regarding the problems facing the nation and suggests, either explicitly or implicitly, that both the leaders and the intellectual classes are incompetent. No easy solutions are offered by Vaid and his relentless use of satire, irony and rupture produce an effect that although literarily very effective, would also serve to isolate him from his contemporaries. After all, the most scathing attack is reserved in the text for Bimal's coffeehouse colleagues. As discussed earlier, while a large number of questions are raised in the text regarding the problems facing the nation, solutions are seemingly absent. Furthermore there is a disconnect between the 'big' questions being discussed in intellectual circles, and the 'fundamental questions' faced by Bimal. What is the nature of the fundamental questions and how do they represent the despair, anxiety and hopelessness as experienced by Bimal as a result of this disconnect? The most significant aspect of this is that when the main protagonist of the story finds no solace or meaning in the world around him, he is left only with internal anxiety and his own exilic feelings, and, is criticised by his contemporaries for

taking the wrong path. In the texts there are multiple references to the nature of fundamental questions, some examples of which are provided below:

> The question was very simple, but at the same time fundamental. If there is a definition of a fundamental question then it is this: however much you think about it, that is how much it becomes twisted, and its roots might descend into depths. There is no solution to a fundamental question, it has feet, but it doesn't have a head, and if it does, then it is bald. Maybe that is why, while thinking on this question Bimal kept helplessly staring towards his feet (when he wasn't looking towards the coffeehouse) and his hand kept stroking his head (on the condition that while looking towards his feet or the coffeehouse his hands would not be crushed in his fists). (Vaid 1999a, 359-360)

Here Bimal is wracked by anxiety, as he clenches his fists, nervously waiting outside the coffeehouse as he deliberates whether or not to enter. He deliberates over the nature of fundamental questions, they are ungraspable, twisted and the more he thinks about them, the more he becomes absorbed in his own existential crisis. So much so, that since he has been thinking about these questions, he is unable to find pleasure in things he would once have enjoyed. As he continually wanders around Connaught Place (we are told elsewhere in the story that he repeatedly does circuits around Connaught Place) he is irritated by people around him enjoying themselves:

> A flock of girls and women are laughing at some stupid thing, and in this Bimal finds an excuse to run away from himself. And ever since he has encountered with these fundamental questions, he doesn't like the least bit, the laughter of saucy females. (Vaid 1999a, 360)

In the following excerpt not only is the relentlessness of the questions highlighted but also the idea that the socially constructed solutions to resolving existential problems are unhelpful:

> The worst habit of fundamental questions is that they are very stubborn. Stubborn children of my mind. They don't move an inch. Go to the coffeehouse or go and sit hidden away in the caves of the Himalayas, they are following you like loyal dogs. There is no relief from them. So there is only one cure. Get nirvana. Where from? In our country nirvana shops are open everywhere. Birla Mandir, Hanumān Mandir, Jain Mandir, Baudh Vihār, Kālā Bāzār. There is a joke in every issue. That's why the complaint of the forefathers is that the Indian youth have degenerated. What else could they do? They can't find a path. All the roads are bad. The contractors embezzle the money. It's not just the poor contractors' fault. The whole structure [of society] is bad...This is the situation everywhere. This very question is in front of everyone: if I were to go then where would I go? (Vaid 1999a, 376-377)

In the above passage Vaid refers to the coffeehouse, the caves of the Himalayas and the many temples of India as sites where one might find relief, in the traditional Indian context, from stubborn questions. However, he then proceeds to dismiss

these locations as productive sites for the resolution of existential crises. Sarcastic references to so-called solutions to fundamental questions are repeated in a number of places throughout the text. In Chapter Two ('Intimacy and Solitude in a Loveless City'), one of the male patrons of the coffeehouse was discussed, delighting in his bus trip, sexually aroused by the opportunity of rubbing up against two females. In that instance, we might recall that the narrator sarcastically referred to listening to the call of the body and taking part in unexpected physical contact as a method of distraction from fundamental questions (Vaid 1999a, 378). Similarly, standing looking at naked pictures at a newsstand, or drawing dirty pictures in a urinal were referred to as ways of relieving the biggest cause of boredom—physical hunger (Vaid 1999a, 381). These are important references with regard to the discussion on fundamental questions and the problems facing the nation, as they establish the idea that the solutions on offer are inherently unproductive. Religious or spiritual endeavours, coffeehouse conversations and/or random physical distractions are all equally futile and only serve to distract the population from the real issues.

The coffeehouse as an unproductive site is also particularly relevant here, as the coffeehouse in postcolonial urban centres was a known meeting-point for the intellectual classes. It provided an arena for discussing the issues facing the country and how best the intelligentsia could assist the national cause:

> *Kāfī hāus dillī ke naujvānoṁ kā mandir (yā śāyad maqbarā) hai. Yah jumlā usne urdū ke kisī risāle meṁ paṛhā thā (yā śāyad usne ise khud hī gaṛhā ho)*
>
> The coffeehouse is the temple (or perhaps tomb) of the young people of Delhi. He must have read this phrase in some Urdu magazine (or perhaps he might have fabricated it himself).
>
> *Mandīr (yā maqbarā) is samay upāsakoṁ (yā lāśoṁ) se khacākhac bharā huā hai. Qahqahoṁ ke phūl baras rahe haiṁ, āvāzoṁ kā yajña ho rahā hai. Guthiyāṁ suljhāyī jā rahī haiṁ ki deś ke sāmne baṛe baṛe savāl haiṁ.*
>
> The temple (or tomb) is packed full with devotees (or corpses) at this time. Flowers of laughter are being showered, there is a ritual Hindu sacrifice of sounds. The puzzles are being solved, that are the biggest questions in front of the country. (Vaid 1999a, 360)

Here we see Vaid mock the coffeehouse (and its patrons) by using references to both Hindu and Muslim religious traditions. He juxtaposes the idea of the coffeehouse as a *mandir* (Hindu temple) or a *maqbarā* (Muslim tomb) of the young people of Delhi, and its patrons as *upāsakoṁ* (devotees) or *lāśoṁ* (corpses) respectively. There are shades here of the identification of tradition being equal to

a pile of corpses which we witnessed earlier in this chapter, but this time, it is Bimal's contemporaries who are the object of his criticism. He also makes a joke of his own imagery, suggesting that he may have borrowed it from an Urdu publication. It is significant here that Bimal defines the coffeehouse patrons negatively in this context, as in doing so he distances himself from his contemporaries. This sets up the dominant discourse (as in, what the intelligentsia and literati discuss) as being problematic from the outset. It is also important that where he refers to 'the puzzles are being solved, that are the biggest questions in front of the country', he uses *baṛe baṛe savāl*, not *buniyādī savāl*. The inference here being that the coffeehouse patrons perceive themselves as solving big issues and identifying the big questions in facing the nation, but that they are not actually identifying the fundamental issues at stake.

The coffeehouse patrons ask Bimal a number of questions to which he has no answer: 'Bimal, what is your philosophy, your view of life'; 'Bimal, what is your matter of concern'; and 'Why have you gone astray?' (Vaid 1999a, 361) These questions indicate that Bimal is out-of-step with his contemporaries. However, they are also the grounds for the criticism of Vaid's literature as being not engaged with the society and lacking a world-view. The narrator suggests that Bimal didn't have any philosophy or philosopher but that he has a thousand concerns which he cannot mention to anyone (Vaid 1999a, 361), which is further evidence of the nature of fundamental questions as representative of an existential crisis which cannot be resolved externally. The text, as well as being a serious reflection on the 'fundamental questions', is also peppered with classic Vaid wit. For example, the narrator describes Bimal as *lājavāb Bimal*, meaning speechless Bimal. However *lājavāb* in this context can also mean peerless, as in Bimal is beyond comparison. Incidentally, this is a pun, a variation of which Vaid has used in the story *Ek Thā Bimal* (on page 384 is the line *bhaī tumhārā koī javāb nahīṁ* meaning both 'you are unparalleled' and 'there is no answer to you'). It also appears in the title of his book of interviews and self-interviews entitled *Javāb Nahīṁ* (Vaid 2002b), meaning 'no answers', or 'peerless'; and is further indication of a preoccupation with insoluble questions in Vaid's literature.

The following is a final excerpt from BCFQ regarding the nature of the fundamental questions as construed by Bimal:

> How long will you go on this way? And how far? Keeping going is not your business, stopping is your dignity. And if this is the state of boredom in youth then? Youth is carefree. This is the problem, I cannot think properly fixed on one matter. Learn to settle. Or go and sit on the banks of the Jamuna. Then people will call you Bimal Dev Maharaj. Or else listen to the songs of the Jamuna prostitutes; if you go then where might you go? But friend, the issue is that it is just the heart, it doesn't settle on one thing (in this deserted region). This is my biggest fault; not fault, characteristic. This is the trouble. You should think after writing. But for that it will be necessary that you might write after thinking. But it is not necessary. If this were a requirement then writing must be closed off to all of our authors. (Vaid 1999a, 364-365)
>
> ...Shake thoroughly the fundamental questions. But first, prepare a list of them. (Vaid 1999a, 365)

This text is significant as it not only confirms statements made previously regarding Bimal being criticised by his contemporaries for being obsessed about fundamental questions, but it is an example where Vaid, through Bimal, explicitly criticises the literary environment. In the first sentences Bimal's colleagues are attempting to change direction and turn him away from his obsession with existential problems. Bimal then identifies boredom and not being able to think clearly as symtpoms of the larger problems he faces. Furthermore, as we have seen in other examples, the solutions suggested by Bimal's contemporaries (in this case to go and sit on the banks of the Jamuna river or visit prostitutes), and the humour Vaid incorporates into the suggestions demonstrate a complete lack of confidence in distraction as a method for resolving existential problems.

In the sentence 'this is my biggest fault, not fault, characteristic' (*merā sabse pahlā nuks, nuks nahīṁ naks*) Vaid uses a play on the words *nuks* (fault) and *naks* (characteristic) to seamlessly lead to an attack on Hindi authors, suggesting that thinking before writing as a prerequisite for Hindi authors, would exclude them all. Later in the passage on page 365 he refers again to the Hindi literary environment, but this time less explicitly, suggesting the need to shake thoroughly the fundamental questions, but that first one should prepare a list of them. This comment is linked specifically to the Hindi literary environment, which had a strong tendency towards cataloguing and listing as a major part of Hindi criticism, which Vaid has criticised elsewhere. Cataloguing and listing as one of the problems in Hindi criticism are discussed in Chapter Four, 'Rebuttal, Criticism and the Crisis in Postcolonial Hindi Criticism'. It is sufficient here to demonstrate that in his fiction, Vaid critiques his contemporaries once again, and links this critique to the insoluble nature of the fundamental questions.

The outcome of this discussion of the problems facing the nation and the fundamental questions faced by Bimal is that we can see an isolating effect in the way Vaid approaches the topic. Bimal as the main protagonist of the story is isolated and isolates himself further in his relentless critique of the way the problems of the nation are being handled. Furthermore, we see a clear picture emerging of how Vaid himself has relentlessly critiqued his own contemporaries via his fictional character, Bimal. One of the ways in which Vaid's views have differed significantly from his literary contemporaries (and his critics) is in the way he engages with the concepts of nation and authenticity. His foray into the realm of these ideas demonstrates a deep engagement with the aesthetics of high-modernism in the *international* context. In the following section, I use excerpts from *Uskā Deś* (section nine of *Uske Bayān*) to explore his view of 'nation' and how although it is distinct from his literary contemporaries, the interrogation of the Indian modern did find some echoes in the work of some prominent artists, such as J. Swaminathan.

The artist's view of 'nation' and authenticity: parallel echoes

In the above section some of the ways in which Vaid articulates the problems facing the nation and the insoluble nature of fundamental questions have been articulated. In the previous examples, the term nation has been used in its historical sense, that is, the Indian nation as defined by the borders established after Independence. The discourse of the Indian nation and nationalism and connected ideas of national commitment and authenticity have been confined to the nation as a political, geographically defined entity. The following paragraphs consider how the nation is constructed by the expatriate artist of *Uske Bayān*, as something very different, and much more abstract than its construction among intellectuals and politicans. The nation as an entity that can not be defined in terms of geographical characteristics, and authenticity as not connected to 'Indianness' is constituted, in the following examples, in a much more creative, modernist way. The excerpt that follows is from *Uskā Deś* (His Nation), part nine, of *Uske Bayān*.

> 'N' says although often I say to some others and myself that there is no particular name and position of my nation, that in my view nation and world are one, that even while I live within a nation or even while living outside of a nation and far from it I can stay near it, I do; that in this time even the crooks and violent people are patriotic to their nation, that on the pretext of nation-worship and service to

the nation there is always in every nation the success of dishonesty and brutality, that sculptors and iconoclasts don't have some special nation, that they should continue to get their muck or bronze, or stone, or steel or iron or blood or flesh or soil or any other such raw materials which they can change and overhaul according to their will or whim; that they should keep getting from wherever the constructed or demolished left-over and lifeless sculptures of others for their own manipulation; *that* becomes their country; that for me the relationship to any country isn't so much with some particular land or sky as much as with its intrisic atmosphere upon which there are several other impacts and influences apart from the earth and sky and which a few times keep changing for no reason; that I want to be counted among those few noted people who are evaluated beyond the boundaries and time of a nation—'N' says although I often blurt out far more over and above all this, in the layer of each such claim some weakness or artificiality can be seen concealed within and without getting rid of it, I know, my haze about my nation will not be able to be cleared. And, 'N' says, when I try to grab that weakness or artificiality then the whole thought thus becomes scattered like some old woman's hair[41].

'N' says, there once was a time when even I, like others, frequently doubted the authenticity of their reasons for going far away from their nation and the capacity of their work and used to ponder why hadn't they all rotted sitting in that foreign atmosphere, but even in that period, N says, those people used to seem to me to be less cowardly and traitors and moreso as rebellious and selfish and now I have begun to judge their selfishness on the proof of their work and if their work is good then I start to treat them favourably. Even so, he says, I am hesitant to wholeheartedly defend them although myself for a very long time having endured the suffering and enjoyment of long distance so much, then I can certainly say that the reason and effect of distance from nation are as complex as those of distance from a beloved, that even having remained far away there is a difficulty and attractiveness in trying to stay near, he who has endured this themselves will be able to understand that, because whichever statues and ghosts have come out of this experience of mine, their qualities and faults might be terrifying, but certainly not superficial, that I am not trying to foster the illusion of generalisation, I am just giving one testimony, that some may or may not believe I am being totally honest in this account. But, 'N' says then having heard the pitch of my intonation and the stuttering, I become silent of my own accord...

But, 'N' says, when my eyes are closed and I am contemplating nation then I don't see naiton, rather countless disorderly scenes begin to flash infront of my eyes... snake-like silence, dangerous and permeating smoke, dirty, crackling faces, ashes, sand, mangey muck-eating children , bones, piercingly high dead voices, wounded cattle, blood-smeared sky, lots of big sick eyes, lost ruins, swamps, stubborn oxen, belching flabby businessmen, deathly hot sun, shit, piss, sweat, pus, spit... (Vaid 1999b, 97-99)

There are a number of important issues relating to the current thesis which are raised in *Uskā Deś*. In previous discussion it was argued that one of the preoccupations of postcolonial Hindi criticism was in determining to what extent a piece of fiction was 'authentic'. It was also suggested that this concern with authenticity was part of the process of creating a stlye of modernity which could be asserted as both Indian and modern. Representing authenticity was particularly

[41] Note there is a pun here as *buṛhiyā ke bāl* also means fairy floss.

pronounced in the case of progressive writers with the emphasis on producing literature which was socially useful. The linking of authenticity and national commitment, to the idea of 'Indianness', has had, as we have seen, a significant influence on criticism of Vaid's literature. That is, one of the charges against him has been that he is un-Indian, or overly Westernized. This has in large part, been attributed to his long absences from India and his career as an academic of English literature in the United States.

One of the features of Vaid's literature which has resulted in negative criticism, is his relentless challenging of the basis on which postcolonial Hindi fiction and its criticism was constructed. The highly modernist and abstract views on nation and authenticity which Vaid provides in *Uskā Deś*, are indicative of a departure from the discourse in Hindi literature of the time. However, the attitudes expressed in *Uskā Deś* were mirrored by prominent artist, and friend of Vaid's, J. Swaminathan. In his PhD thesis entitled 'Nation, tradition, modernism: Indian art in the twentieth century', Sambrani (2005) raises some of the concerns which I raise with regard to Hindi literature, in the context of Indian art. He argues that Group 1890, formed in 1962, and of which J.Swaminathan was a founding member, (Sambrani 2005, 156) interrogated the idea of artistic modernism in the Indian context. Sambrani argues that one of the features of the postcolonial Indian art-world was that:

> art history [was] written within the history of the nation-state, with certain kinds of art practice being privileged at various times as 'authentic' representations of an art which is both 'modern' and 'Indian'. (Sambrani 2005, 15-16)

He also argues that what distinguished Swaminathan and the artists of Group 1890 was their relationship with their work, and that this was clearly distinguished from a historical definition of authenticity:

> Swaminathan's underlying argument to my mind was about authenticity defined as a deeply felt relationship with the work, the work becoming a sublimation of existential struggle. This is in clear distinction to a historical definition of authenticity. Reality in Swaminathan's discourse was not about historical existence, but an immanent state of being. His notion of reality

> and the task of the artist was couched in semi-metaphysical terms... (Sambrani 2005, 177)

It is argued that Vaid shared this approach, and that *Uskā Deś* indicates a departure from the historical definition of authenticity that Sambrani outlines. Both Swaminathan and Vaid can be seen as pushing the boundaries of Indian modernism in their respective arts. They also both refuse to conform to the notion of a 'classicised modern' which Sambrani discusses below:

> A large part of urban elite art in twentieth century India can be characterized by a tendency towards a valorization of 'acceptable' work that does not pose fundamental challenges to the mainstream of national art. It may even be ventured that so great is the yearning for a classical tradition, and so acute the feeling of its neglect and loss during colonial times, that the Indian art establishment proceeds to produce the anachronism of a 'classical' modernism. It is this classicised national modern that emerges as the object of critique in the manifesto and work of the artists of Group 1890. (Sambrani 2005, 162)

As we can see in the lengthy excerpt from *Uskā Deś* above, Vaid challenges the idea of nation being in any particular physical location, suggesting, rather, that 'the relationship to any country isn't so much with some particular land or sky as much as with its intrisic atmosphere.' *Uskā Deś* probes many of the issues which were discussed in international discourse, where literary form became the exile's home.

In the final part of the excerpt provided above, the expatriate sculptor reflects on criticism that he sees only the dirt and filth of his nation, listing his visions of 'shit, pus, sweat' etc, which is a retort to criticisms that Vaid reduces Indian reality to filth. Jaidev has referred to this as self-indulgence and argues that such an approach weakens Vaid's credibility as a culture critic:

> The problem with Vaid's exposition of Indian horrors is that the satiric impulse turns into self-indulgence. Indian culture is reduced to mere rubbish, suitable only for the garbage bin. This weakens Vaid's credibility as a culture critic. (Jaidev 1993, 134)

The idea that Vaid writes in a confronting way, which provokes anxieties regarding ideas that his contemporaries considered sacrosanct, will be discussed in the

context of the crisis in Hindi criticism which developed in Chapter Four. In this context however we can see Vaid providing a critique of the literary environment, and a reflection on some of the criticisms of his literature, although in a fictional form. The main argument with regard to the current chapter is that Vaid presents an alternative view of nation and authenticity, which is much more consistent with the international high-modernist and avant garde trends of his period, but which provoke Indian anxieties regarding the nation and authenticity as inextricably linked to notions of 'Indianness.'

Language issues and the struggle for a 'national' language

A significant issue in India during the Nehruvian period was language. The two main language issues Nehru faced during his time as Prime Minister were the establishment of linguistic states and solving the issue of a national language for the Indian union (King 1997, 52). The following pages focus on the latter. The linguistic states issue, equally significant in terms of the politics of the time, falls largely outside the scope of the current thesis[42]. The main concern is with the centrality of discourse around India's national language in the period preceding and during which Vaid wrote the Bimal trilogy of stories. The way Hindi literary production and criticism were implicated in the nationalist agenda of creating a style of Hindi which could distinguish itself clearly from Urdu is also considered.

India's language issues were intimately connected with nationalism, with King describing language as 'one of the defining criteria of nationalism' (King 1997, 26). In the following section, an outline is provided of some of the key issues regarding linguistic nationalism as it played out in the Indian context, and the influence of nationalism on the Hindi literary sphere. Literature from Vaid's texts which deals specifically with India's language problematic (specifically the role of English, Hindi, and Urdu) will then be analysed.

With the creation of India and Pakistan as separate nations at the time of independence, the Hindi-Urdu split became particularly pronounced. Hindi became inextricably linked to India and Hinduism and Urdu to Muslims and Pakistan. However this is not to suggest that the division between Hindi and Urdu was a

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[42] For an informative accounts on the creation of linguistic provinces see for example: Ramachandra Guha's chapter entitled: 'Redrawing the Map', in *India after Gandhi* (Guha 2007, 180-200) and Robert King's *Nehru and the Language Politics of India* (King 1997).

post-independence phenomenon. Since the 19th century with the build up of nationalism and anti-colonial sentiment, there had been many moves afoot both to standardize Indian language, and to create boundaries between the languages[43]. In the early 1900s a number of institutions were established with the agenda of promulgating identifiable styles of Hindi and Urdu. In the case of Hindi, the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan of Allahabad, established in 1910, and the Nagari Pracharini Sabha of Banaras, established in 1893, played a large role in promoting Hindi and the Devanagari script (Aneesh 2010, 101). In the case of Urdu, the Urdu Defence Association of Allahabad, established in 1898 and Anjuman-e-Taraqui-e-Urdu, established in 1898 (Aneesh 2010, 101), were equally enthusiastic for the promulagation of Urdu in the *nastāliq* script. These institutions played a significant role in the adaption of Indian languages to suit the nationalist agenda. In the case of Hindi, the language became highly Sanskritized and a conscious effort was made to free Hindi from its Perso-Arabic influences. It was on a literary level that the distinction between Hindi and Urdu became most pronounced. In *Hindi Nationalism*, Alok Rai is scathing of the role of institutions such as the Nagari Pracharini Sabha and the impact they had in influencing the Hindi language and literary production:

> [M]y project may be understood as one of seeking to free Hindi from the clutches of the professional Hindiwallahs—to enable the language to break free of its sanctimonious abductors, the entrenched elites at Nagari Pracharini Sabha...and Hindi Sahitya Sammelan...which have done so much to darken Hindi's name. (Rai 2000, 1)

The clearly marked distinction between Hindi and Urdu as literary languages impacted on the choices authors made regarding both vocabulary and style. This created a situation whereby the spoken language became notably different from the written language. Francesca Orsini suggests that this created a distinction between the way language was used in public and private lives:

> The self-definition of Hindi against Urdu drew new and rigid linguistic boundaries. While most Hindi writers of the nineteenth century were proficient in Urdu, at critical junctures their advocacy of Hindi as public and

[43] Vasudha Dalmia has discussed the nationalist aspirations of Hindi and the role of Hindi as language of the Hindus in 19th century India in detail in *The Nationalization of Hindu traditions: Bhāratendu Hariśchandra and Nineteenth-century Banaras* (1996). In particular, see chapter four, pp.146-221.

> written language would become exclusive and create a hiatus between their *public* and *private* uses of language. Although privately they would read Urdu, Persian and English, publicly they would dismiss them in favour of Hindi. In fact, writing and reading Hindi became a self-conscious choice, which began to imply one's own culture—as much as writing Urdu became a sign of disloyalty. (Orsini 2002, 30)

The self-consciousness of the choice of language by authors continued, and was a contentious issue in the post-independence period, exacerbated by the struggle to create Hindi as the sole official language of the Indian union. The language issues India faced were deeply connected to the struggle for authenticity and establishing an identifiably Indian 'essence'. Aneesh has discussed the role of languages in the Indian context as being a process whereby communities used language to create closed communities, and this is reflected particularly obviously in the literary context. The national language, Aneesh suggests, 'was to demonstrate that it could be the appropriate medium of expression of a cultural "essence" of the nation, or its national content...' (Aneesh 2010, 96).

The impact of this linguistic conservatism on literary production was immense and the relationship between politics and language was only strengthened as the nationalist struggle of the 1930s gained momentum.

> The Hindi-Hindustani controversy strengthened the links between Hindi politicians and the Hindi establishment at the head of literary associations and educational institutions. They were likely partners, as whatever their political leaning, they shared a certain cultural conservatism, a view of Hindi as a cultural symbol, a normative and moral approach to literature, and an indifference towards contemporary writers. This partnership was fundamental to securing official status for Hindi and counteracting political canvassing for Hindustani at the national level, yet it also undercut the literary and cultural authority of independent writers and critical voices. (Orsini 2002, 358)

This relationship between the political climate and contemporary literature became even more pronounced in the 1950s and 1960s as there was a major push to create Hindi as the sole official language of India. In 1950, under Nehru's leadership, Hindi was established as:

> 'the official language of the union'...[and] English allowed to coexist alongside Hindi for 'official purposes of the union' for fifteen years, after which—1965—it was supposed to give way altogether to Hindi. (King 1997, 74-75)

This decision was particularly unpopular with the southern states which felt that they would be severely disadvantaged, particularly in relation to government jobs, if Hindi became the sole language for official purposes. By 1959 Nehru conceded and promised that 'Hindi would not be imposed on the country and that English would continue as an associate additional language for official purposes indefinitely' (King 1997, 129). However as the 1965 deadline approached, the discontent became more severe and by 1963 the Official Language Bill was passed and 'provided that English may continue to be used past 1965, in addition to Hindi, for all official purposes of the union and in parliament' (King 1997, 131).

These issues regarding language and nationalism in India are important for a study of Vaid's literature, as he is an author who refused to 'standardize' or 'Sanskritize' his language in order to demonstrate nationalist commitment. In the post-Partition era this sensitivity to language was exacerbated and Vaid earned himself a reputation for what came to be regarded as a confronting mix of Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi vocabulary. Furthermore he referred constantly in his fiction to a number of different cultural 'centres', drawing many times from a mix of Sanskrit literary references, Urdu poetry, Bollywood movies and English literature. In the context in which he wrote, this was considered controversial and was not appreciated by some of his contemporaries, or the Hindiwallahs of the literary establishment. For example, in an interview with Krishna Sobti (literary contemporary of Vaid's), she discussed how Vaid's linguistic mix, and the way he assimilated Punjabi and Urdu into his Hindi fiction was not well received in the early postcolonial period as in that time there was a rejection of Urdu language content in Hindi literature (Interviewed on 27 May 2003). To return to the perspective provided by Alok Rai on Hindi nationalism, it is argued that on the level of language, Vaid was not well received, not because he modified his language, but because he refused to modify it to make it more consistent with Hindiwallah 'Hindi' and was thus 'rendered vulnerable' for his alternative linguistic identity:

> My account of the making of 'Hindi' from Hindi, is, in the main a narrative of *intimate destabilisation and dispossession.* This derives, at the most general level, from the nature of language itself, from the fact that *it* is such an intimate possession, something that one possesses in the same measure that one is possessed by it. Language is bound up with the foundations of one's being, with memories and emotions, with the subtle structures of the worlds in which one lives. To be rendered vulnerable at *that* level is a heavy price to pay for an alternative linguistic and cultural identity. But language is nevertheless, because of its inalienable privacy, an ideal vehicle for identity politics, for such intimate possession and dispossession. (Rai 2000, 102-103)

Robert King has discussed the role of language in a nationalist context as serving 'either as a badge of membership in the community or as a means of exclusion and exile' (King 1997, 29). This is critical for a reading of Vaid's literature, his language choice is one area which left him vulnerable to the type of exclusion and exile to which King refers. It was not just his choice of language that was different from the Hindi literary establishment, he also makes numerous direct references to the Hindi language problematic in his fiction. The following section elucidates some of the ways in which Vaid has confronted the issue of language, and national language in the texts, and how his code-mixing is used to maximise the impact of his indictment of the Hindi literary environment.

The first example used demonstrates the way language issues are represented in Vaid's fiction and is from *Samādhi*, the first in the trilogy of Bimal stories:

> Look Bimal, look at it this way. Only just smile slowly, we will understand that this is love. Won't you look? If you won't speak then I'll tickle you. Yes, we too are very bad, we are not even the dust off the soles of Shyama's feet, just kill us. Kill me, murder me, slaughter me. Julietta, Julietta, beloved Julietta. Even now you won't laugh? Won't you laugh? Okay, enough. Take Shyama and give her one in your room. Yes we are very vulgar. You are the only avatar of the Mahatma Buddha. Bimal, yesterday I met Bhārat Bhuṣan. He was saying—after reading the whole of Indian history from 5000 B.C til now tomorrow at exactly 12 at night I will... Leave this one, give up on Bhārat Bhuṣan. I will tell you his story another time. So tell me, have you ever seen the Romeo and Juliet of India? No bastard, then what have you seen except for Shyama? Go bastard, go and ingratiate yourself with Shyama. I will now amuse myself with my own Shyama for some time. (Vaid 1999a, 345)

In this excerpt Vaid weaves a number of English words and literary references into the text. Most notably there are two references to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet line. The first is:

> *kil mī, marḍar mī, slāṭar mī. Jūliyaṭṭā, jūliyaṭṭā, pyārī jūliyaṭṭa*
>
> Kill me, murder me, slaughter me. Julietta, Julietta, beloved Julietta. (Vaid 1999a, 345)

This is followed later in the paragraph by:

> *is samay to yahī batāo ki tumne hindustānī kī 'romiyo aur jūliyaṭ' dekhī hai?*
>
> So tell me, have you ever seen the Romeo and Juliet of India? (Vaid 1999a, 345)

What is striking here is that Vaid uses the Englişh phrases 'kill me, murder me, slaughter me' in Devanagari script. This first reference to Juliet is followed by a provocation regarding whether or not the listener has heard of the Indian Romeo and Juliet. This is significant as in the postcolonial period there was a strong focus on particular types of English literature in Indian schools and universities. Shakespeare was one of the earliest English authors translated into Hindi (1870s) (Trivedi 1993b, 208), and his fiction had enormous currency as part of the English 'canon' from which Indians drew. In *Bimal in Bog* (Vaid's own transcreation of *Bimal urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ*), the use of Shakespeare in Indian curriculum is referred to as an example of the problems inherent in the Indian education system regarding rote learning and drawing from the same English literary sources repeatedly, with the effect of stagnating intellectual progress:

> Malaji, I don't espouse English even though I make my miserable living out of it. And I don't push Hindi even though that is the medium of my other misery, as you don't know. I am for Urdu. And for Urduized Hindi. In other words Malaji, I'm all for the elimination of English...English let Hindi have its own Romantics. I wish it hadn't. English induced experimentalism. Effete. English gave us our Progressive period. A decade too late. How come we can't even crap in our own language? Who says so? We are staring at their leftovers. They master our minds. We treat them like our twin brothers...We still steal from their textbooks. We chew their cud...memorizing remains the maid of all other servants. We want to vomit what we have indigested. Our system only tests our retentiveness. Look at our students here. All year round you can hear them snoring in every class. Then five hours before the examination you can see them stuffing themselves with Shakespeare or what have you without tears... (Vaid, *Bimal in Bog* 2002a, 112-117)

In these examples Vaid aims harsh criticism at the manner in which the Indian education system has incorporated colonial literature into its education system. The influence of English literature in this context is problematic not in itself, rather it is the way in which it has been established as the paradigm for Indian education.

Hindi then, is in a state of constantly trying to 'catch-up' with what England had to offer, which had what he presents as a stultifying effect on Hindi literary production. Harish Trivedi discusses this idea of 'catching up' in his article *Reading English, Writing Hindi*:

> [W]ith the reception of modernism and progressivism in India, we finally caught up with the latest in English literature. In the late nineteenth century, we had been assiduously assimilating the English classics of the eighteenth century; in the 1920s and 1930s, we had newly discovered the English romantic poets of a hundred years ago; but now, in the 1940s, the same literary winds were blowing simultaneously in London and New York as well as in Allahabad and Mysore. (Trivedi 1993b, 220)

Trivedi's sarcastic tone in the above quote problematizes, as Vaid has done in his literature, the idea that India is in a constant state of 'catching' up with international (specifically English) literary trends. The concept of 'catching-up' with English literature and the idea that the importation of English literature and influence was reflective of the hegemony of the British is critical in understanding accusation regarding Vaid's fiction as overly imitative. Chapter Four includes a discussion of how Vaid's literature was accused of being overly imitative not, I argue, on the basis that he borrows from the West *per se*, but on the basis of *what* he borrows, and the highly experimental style he adopts which is construed as being anti-Indian and overly Western. In Vaid's case, he drew from an enormous variety of literary sources, which were not being utilised by other Hindi writers at the time. In the above fictional examples we see him chide the literary and educational institutions for their obsession with 'catching-up' with literary movements of the West. A certain 'canon' formed regarding how best to incorporate influence from the West in Indian literary production, and what should be avoided in the interests of best serving emergent Indian modernity. In the introduction to this thesis it was suggested that there was an emphasis in postcolonial India on creating a style of modernity that could demonstrate that it was both modern and uniquely Indian. The relationship between Western literary influence and the extent to which it was adopted or incorporated into Hindi literary production is one area in which this tension played out. Regarding the influence of English literature on Indian literature, Trivedi discussed the

hegemonic oppression which characterized the relationship between the literatures:

> The influence of English literature on Indian literature may be one of the most extensive and profound influences ever exerted by one literature over another, but it still remains only a very small part of the larger master narrative, if one may call it, of the impact of British colonial rule on India, and is inextricalbly entwined with it. It was not merely, or even mainly, a literary and cultural influence; it was a more comprehensively hegemonic oppression. (Trivedi 2007, 124)

In the examples provided above it is apparent that Vaid refers directly to the hegemonic pressure of which Trivedi speaks, but at the same time harshly criticizes the Indian role in its engagement with English literature. In the line 'have you seen the Romeo and Juliet of India?' Vaid mocks the copying and imitative tendency of Indian literatteurs. He attacks the hegemonic oppression of the English, but at the same time also attacks his Indian contemporaries for not being able to desist from parroting the same texts. It is a sharp indictment of the Indian literary scene and an implicit incitement to change the staus quo. In the context of the highly charged linguistic environment, Vaid deploys an intertextual method to make comments about the role of English in the Indian education system, in a context where Hindi and English were constantly being played off against each other.

There are a number of other explicit examples of Vaid's insertion of excerpts from English literature into the text. The following example on pages 344-345 illustrates this point:

> *Umh sale, agar liknā hī hai to kuch is koṭi kā likho:*
>
> Disgusting Bastards, if you must write something, then write something of this standard:
>
> What is life
>
> Without a knife
>
> To one who has tasted a higher existence!
>
> *Aur yā phir esā likho—*
>
> Or write this:
>
> O hush thee my baby
>
> Thy sire was a knight

Thy mother a lady
Both lovely and bright
The woods and the glens
And the meadows you see
Are all, dear baby,
Belonging to thee. (Vaid 1999a, 344-345)

The first example of English text (noting that both examples appear in English script) is an excerpt from Book I of *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot (written in 1860). The second is an excerpt from *Lullaby of an Infant Chief* written by Scottish author Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832).

On pages 356-357, the final pages of *Samādhi* the English intertextual references continue. 'Seek and it shall be given unto thee?' (p356) is a biblical reference, from the book of Matthew, which is soon followed by 'My conscience clear my chief defence?' a line from *My Mind to me a Kingdom Is*, by Sir Edward Dyer (d.1607). Embedded in a Hindi sentence later on the same page is a line from Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, 'O father let my country awake.' Finally, and on the last page of the story (p357) Vaid quotes Isaac Watts (1674-1748):

Father, father, mercy take
Poetry I shall never make!
And if I ever do by mistake,
I shall turn it into prose.

Each of these examples are embedded into Hindi text, and have a rupturing effect on the text. Through juxtaposing examples from 'canonical' English sources, Vaid seeks to point to the sense of inferiority among the Hindi intelligentsia about 'worth' of the language in which they wrote.

The next excerpt, also from *Samādhi*, shows the way Vaid skilfully weaves his harsh critique of the Hindi literary environment into his prose, and also uses it to comment on the way the Hindi establishment promotes the nationalist agenda, either implicitly, or explicitly.

> My suggestion is that while we're at it today we should prepare a list of those topics on which, over the next decade, we will exchange ideas from time to time. For the past three years we have kept postponing this task. So Gentlemen start from this direction.
>
> 1. Love and hatred in Hindi literature.
>
> 2. Opposition to wives in Hindi literature.

3. Hindi literature—a paradox.

4. The place of female publishers in Hindi literature.

5. Burning questions in Hindi literature.

6. Hindi literature and Allahabadism/experimentalism

7. Hindi literature and Vitamin E complex.

8. The game of strategy in Hindi literature

9. The art/craftiness of book binding in Hindi literature.

10. The infatuation with the other world in Hindi literature.

11. The joy of riding a camel in Hindi literature.

12. The abundance of Urduvalas in Hindi literature.

13. Braggers in Hindi literature.

14. And lastly-the divine wrath (that is the voice from the sky/radio stations) on Hindi literature.

(Bimal, will you ever be serious or not?) (Vaid 1999a, 353-354)

In his textual sample Vaid has provided a list of fourteen 'subjects' on which Hindi literatteurs might concentrate. This idea of the subject or content based literature as a preoccupation in postcolonial Hindi fiction will be returned to in Chapter Four. For the purposes of this chapter the plays on words that Vaid uses in the itemised suggestions will be drawn out. Vaid refers here to a tendency in Hindi critical circles to catalogue and survey, rather than offer rigorous analytical criticism of Hindi literature. In items two and four there is reference to the preoccupation with 'women' as subjects in Hindi literature and publishing.

2. Hindī sāhitya meṁ patnīvirodh

Opposition to wives in Hindi literature.

4. Hindī sahitya meṁ nārī prakāśakoṁ kā sthān

The place of female publishers in Hindi literature.

This is one of the places in Vaid's fiction where he critiques the content-based approach of the progressive movement, and the emphasis progressive writers placed on bringing to light marginalized voices such as women, and Dalits. This is discussed in more detail with regard to the crisis in Hindi criticism and Vaid's non-fiction comments in order to confirm this assessment. It is sufficient to note here that 'marginalized' writing was deemed to be more 'authentic' in the postcolonial period, than the formal innovations in style of authors such as Vaid.

Item six requires detailed discussion as it strikes at the heart of the stultifying effect progressivism had on the development of more experimental

Hindi fiction, and the absence of experimentalism (in Vaid's view) in the Hindi environment.

6. Hindī sahitya meṁ prayāgvād

Allahabadism/experimentalism in Hindi literature.

This sentence is striking as at first sight *prayāgvād* appears as a typographical error; the logical word in this context would be *prayogvād*, meaning experimentalism. The word *prayāg* means a pilgrimage-place, specifically the confluence of the Ganges and Jamna rivers in Allahabad (McGregor 1993, 663). That is Prayāg as a geographical location means Allahabad. As Francesca Orsini has discussed, Allahabad was a major centre for Hindi literature in the 1930s and 1940s and Allahabad University 'became a base for progressive and Marxist writers and critics' (Orsini 2002, 36). In her biography of Upendranath Ashk, Daisy Rockwell has also discussed the role of Allahabad as a 'Hindi' literary centre. In particular she discusses how Allahabad and Benaras became 'principle sites for MSH [Modern Standard Hindi] publishing' and institutions such as the NPS[44], HSS[45], BHU[46] and Allahabad University 'played major roles in the spread of Hindi and the production of Hindi literary culture' (Rockwell 2004, 83).

In Vaid's text the suffix *-vād* has been added to *prayāg* so *prayāgvād* refers to Allahabadism. The more common word in the Hindi literary context, as noted above, is *prayogvād*, meaning experimentalism. In Chapter One there was discussion on the meeting of progressivism with experimentalism in a volume of poetry edited by Agyeya in 1943 and that Agyeya and the Tara Saptaka poets were credited with marking the beginning of *prayogvād* in Hindi fiction. Harish Trivedi's discussion was also referred to regarding the Tara Saptaka poets and the 'overlapping movements modernism and progressivism [which] came to be, more so in India than in the West, strange bedfellows' (Trivedi 1993b, 219). Trivedi also raised the issue that five of the seven authors declared themselves as Communists or Marxists. (Trivedi 1993b, 219). Therefore Vaid's sentence above regarding '*prayāgvād*' can be seen as a pithy critique of the basis of experimentalism in Hindi fiction as intricately linked to the Marxist/Communist agenda, and the Allahabad authors as having a style of experimentalism which was still closely linked with

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[44] *Nagari Pracharini Sabha*
[45] *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan*
[46] Benaras Hindu University

progressivism. In this one short sentence Vaid challenged the idea of any serious experimentalism in Hindi fiction, as it cannot escape from Allahabadism and progressivism.

In item twelve, Vaid refers directly to the role of Urdu in Hindi literature which leads the reader to reflect on the ridiculousness of such a topic. It also refers to the tension between Hindi and Urdu and the role the Hindi establishment played in sharply differentiating between Hindi and Urdu:

> *12. Hindī sahitya meṁ urdū vāloṁ kī bharmār*
>
> The abundance of Urduvalas in Hindi literature.

In the last item on the list Vaid uses a skilful pun to comment on the role of Hindi radio in standardizing the Hindi language in the postcolonial period:

> *14. Aur antīm hai—hindī sahitya par khudā (arthat ākāśvāṇī) kī mār*
>
> And lastly—the divine wrath (that is the voice from the sky/radio stations) in Hindi literature.

The pun in this line is on the word Vaid uses to qualify divine wrath (*khudā*), which is *ākāśvāṇī*. While literally *ākāśvāṇī* is a compound meaning 'voice from the sky', it is also the name of one of the most popular state-owned Hindi radio stations. Here Vaid refers both the role of religion (God) in Hindi literature, and also the role of radio stations in promoting and promulgating a highly Sanskritized style of Hindi to support the nationalist agenda of Hindi language politics.

The following is an excerpt from BCFQ which raises the issue of national language directly:

> There are lots of big questions facing the country.
>
> (Who cares?)
>
> The populace of the country is demanding answers to those questions.
>
> (Who cares?)
>
> For example the question of a national language.
>
> (This is neither an example nor a question, this is simply a furore.)
>
> The country's people want Hindi.
>
> (The country's people want bread, employment and clothing.)
>
> The only national language should be Hindi.
>
> I'm asking what is the problem with English?
>
> I'm answering that it is another's tongue.

(All of the educated people of the country are suffering from the love of another man's wife.)

(Another's woman, another's tongue, Hindī, Hindū, Hindustān.)

(We will not let Pakistan be made a different country.).

All the languages should get the same opportunity to flourish

(But why just languages? Every human should have the same opportunity to flourish This is the requirement of humanity, or at least of Indianness.)

The Hindi region is very backward.

(Like a child lamenting for its mother.)

The whole country is very backward. (Vaid 1999a, 367)

The excerpt begins with the many questions facing the nation which have been discussed earlier in this chapter. In this case one of those questions is the issue of national language (*rāṣṭrbhāṣā*). The question of national language is demoted to being a furore more than an issue. In the lines that follow, Vaid uses the idea that Hindi is the population's choice for inserting a witty line which is a variation of a common Hindi expression. The sentence in the Hindi original is : *deś kī jantā roṭī, rozī , kapṛā cāhtī hai/* the population of the country want food, employment clothing, which is a variation on the standard Hindi expression which would usually refer to *roṭī, rozī* and *makān*, meaning food, clothing and housing.

In yet another example of Vaid's acerbic wit, he uses a set of five rhyming lines to comment on nationalist discourse regarding the Hindi language:

Meṁ puchtā hūṁ angrezī meṁ kyā burāī hai?

Meṁ javāb detā hūṁ ki vah zabān parāyī haiṁ

(deś kī sabhī śikṣit log parakīyā prem se pīḍit haiṁ)

(parāyī aurat, parāyī zabān, Hindī, Hindū Hindustān.)

Nahīṁ banegā Pākistān)

I'm asking what is the problem with English?

I'm answering that it is another's tongue.

(All of the educated people of the country are suffering from the love of another man's wife.)

(Another's woman, another's tongue, Hindī, Hindū, Hindustān.)

(We will not let Pakistan be made). (Vaid 1999a, 367)

In this example a number of very culturally specific references are evident. Vaid uses the discourse around language in the context of educated people being in love with another man's wife to lead into the slogan Hindī, Hindū, Hindūstān, which was popular as part of the national struggle to associate Hindi with India (and by

definition, to exclude Urdu which was represented as belonging in Pakistan). Alok Rai has discussed the slogan, coined by Pratap Narain Misra:

> *Cahuṁhuṁ jusāṁco nij kalian*
> *To sab mili bhārat santān!*
> *Japo nirantar ek jabān*
> *Hindī hindū hindustān*
> If your well-being you really want
> O children of Bharat!
> Then chant forever but these words—
> Hindi, Hindu Hindustan! (Misra in Rai 2000, 90)

It is important to note here that in the original slogan *jabān* (tongue/language) is used, not *zabān* which Vaid uses, indicating the Sanskrit influence in Misra's version, and a conscious choice on Vaid's behalf to use the 'Urdu' version. These lines are both amusing, but also highly charged in their ironic vision, one of the writing strategies Vaid perfected, and which provokes harsh criticism. The result is that Vaid attacks 'Hindi' nationalism and subverts the meaning of the popular slogan which was part of the Hindu nationalist imagination of the period.

It is also important here to note that Urdu in the nationalist imagination was often referred to as the second wife of Hindi, so that Vaid's references to the slogan in the context of educated people being in love with another man's wife is relevant. Alok Rai has discussed the representation of Urdu as the 'flashy and young second wife' as follows:

> The social arrogance which Urdu protagonists had expressed in respect of Hindi—low-born, yokelish, etc—finds a curious reflection in the terms in which Hindi protagonists describe Urdu. Thus in their descriptions, Urdu becomes the language of prostitutes and the brazen and degenerate urban culture that is associated with them and their feudal clients. 'Hindi', by the same token, becomes the language of simplicity and virtue, as against Urdu's deceitful meretriciousness. Repeatedly, Urdu is represented as the flashy and young second wife, whose obvious attractions do not have the solid durability of the good old first wife Hindi. (Rai 2000, 78)

Vaid plays with these ideas to maximum effect in the lines provided above, but in each line destabilizes the usual context in which the references are discussed and ruptures the basis on which Hindi nationalism is constructed.

In a final comment on this passage of fiction, Vaid's fiction points to the necessity for all languages to be given the opportunity to flourish. The two lines in the Hindi original are:

> *Sārī bhāṣāoṁ ko panapne kā ek sā avsar milnā cāhie.*
>
> *(sirf bhāṣāoṁ ko hī kyoṁ, har insān ko panapne kāavsar milnā cāhie. Insāniyat yā kam se kam hindūstāniyat kā yahī takāzā hai.)*
>
> All the languages should get the same opportunity to flourish
>
> (But why just languages? Every human should have the same opportunity to flourish This is the requirement of humanity, or at least of Indianness.)

Vaid uses a play on the words humanity and Indianness, to refer to one of the main themes I have discussed in this thesis that is the preoccupation in the postcolonial period with creating a style of Indianness which could be both modern and authentically Indian. In this context Vaid questions the nationalist view of Indianness, suggesting that it would be much more fruitful to discuss the whole of humanity, not just 'Indianness'. In terms of the language debate, Hindi supporters referred regularly to Hindi as more 'Indian' than the more 'foreign' Urdu:

> While Urdu supporters dismissed Khari Boli Hindi as a 'new' and artificially created language, Hindi claimed greater antiquity and the advantage of 'Indianness' over Urdu's 'foreignness.'...The 'Indianness', naturalness and antiquity of Hindi were emphasized so as to downplay Urdu as an artificial and foreign language, derived from a spoken (i.e. inferior) style of Hindi. (Orsini 2002, 131)

What the above analysis has shown is that Vaid uses puns, humour and satire to great effect in the text, but that this also has a rupturing effect as he deconstructs the basis on which Hindi nationalism was formulated and continued to reassert itself.

The following example shows Vaid engaging with the tension between Hindi and Urdu, but also the issue of censorship and prohibition:

> Strike up an interesting conversation.
>
> I'm reciting a verse.

(verses of Urdu/lions of Urdu)

Nanny-goats/simpletons of Hindi!

The lion and the goat kissing each other has been depicted as an electoral symbol of the Ramrajya Parishad.

(Inform the film censor board)

So your honour, I am presenting a *śer*; the questions are arising on dejected faces and dry lips.

Wonderful, wonderful, you said pe for pa. (Vaid 1999a, 371)

Urdū kī śer can mean two things, in the first and most obvious sense, it would refer to verses of Urdu, a *śer* being a style of Urdu verse. *Śer* however also means lion, which would make the sentence 'lions of Urdu'. Vaid uses this play on words in the following sentence, *Hindī kī bakriyāṁ,* which literally means nanny-goats of Hindi, the implication being, simpletons of Hindi. This leads seamlessly into Vaid referring to the electoral symbol of the Ramrajya Parishad, which was a goat and a lion kissing each other. The Ramrajya Parishad was a party of the Indian Right which, Guha suggests, was even more orthodox than the Jana Sangh (Guha 2007, 138). The line following this reference says 'inform the censor board', which refers to the heavy-hand of censorship with regard to the film industry, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. Madhava Prasad has discussed the role the censorship board played, particularly with regards to the prohibition on kissing:

> In the post-independence era, a much discussed feature of the censorship code for Indian films has been the prohibition of scenes of kissing...the ban on kissing strikes us as obviously related to a nationalist politics of culture. The most frequently offered justification of this informal prohibition has been that it corresponds to the need to maintain the Indianness of Indian culture, to which kissing—described as a sign of westerness—is alien. (Prasad 1993, 72)

Thus, in the above textual samples we see Vaid carefully weave ideas of prohibition, Hindi nationalism and the ongoing tensions between the Indian languages and how these tensions were exacerbated by nationalist groups who sought to construct a style of 'Indianness' which could clearly distinguish itself from the Western or Muslim 'other.' This section is concluded with an example from *Bimal in Bog*, which encapsulates a significant amount of the discussion above regarding Vaid's critique of the language problematic *vis a vis* Hindi and Urdu:

> They will accuse you of escapist expliticism. They will say you are unwieldy as well as undersized. Untrue. Ungood. Unbeautiful. They will throw your own fists in your face. Hater of Hindi! Adorer of Urdu! Is trying to uproot the tree under whose shade he is shitting! They will accuse you of creating a character who is only a half clown. He's tearing our traditions apart. Let's tear him apart. His screams are scandalous. His style both hybrid and obscene. He's an ape of alien lions. And thus they will take my few readers away from me. (Vaid 2002a, 62)

Three main sections have been used in this chapter to examine the way Vaid engages with the Indian nation and nationalism in the postcolonial period. A number of examples in the fiction have been considered which demonstrate Vaid's deep suspicion of both religious nationalism and secular nationalism and how he repeatedly challenges the basis on which varied nationalist agendas are constructed and propagated. In the first section the way he discussed fathers, mothers and forbears and the negative impact of tradition were explored. The roles of the forbears (both familial and literary) are presented as adding to, rather than alleviating the problems of the younger generation. The second section showed the ways the questions facing the nation were significantly different from Bimal's 'fundamental questions' and that Vaid used the coffeehouse discussions regarding the big issues confronting the nation to challenge the nationalist framework. Furthermore, the fundamental questions were much more insoluble and existential than the national question, and demonstrated an emphasis in the literature on the boredom, alienation and hopelessness of the main protagonist Bimal. The second section also considered the much more abstract view of nation and authenticity as presented in *Uske Bayān*. This offered a challenge to conventional nationalist imagery regarding what constitutes 'authentic' India/Indians. In the final section of the chapter the way Vaid presented the issue of national language, and the tensions between English, Hindi and Urdu in the postcolonial period were discussed. Primarily, the analysis in this chapter has demonstrated that Vaid is deeply engaged with the socio-political milieu of the time and uses his fiction as a forum to challenge the dominant discourse of nationalism and to expose the hypocrisies which accompany it. To this end, rupture, dissonance, irony and satire are used as key writing strategies which destabilize the dominant discourse.

Chapter 4: Criticism, Rebuttal and the Crisis in Postcolonial Hindi Criticism

> Writing of the Hindi short story, or of any other form of Indian writing today, for an audience more or less uninformed but presumably curious, is perhaps analogous to arranging a marriage on the telephone between an unseen Indian and an unsuspecting foreigner. Traditionally, we in India have been pretty successful in bringing together, in lasting war-wedlock, utter strangers whom even God would have preferred to keep asunder. Thus, if my main objective in this essay were to win over, by means fair or foul, a foreign audience for the Hindi short story, I would try to present it as something uniquely Indian yet universally appealing. But an audience won through a deceitful suppression of the truth—the complexion of the bride, the squint in her left eye, and so on—would not be worth the fraud. (Vaid 1969, 503-504)

The following chapter considers accusations of Vaid's fiction as obsessed with sex, not socially engaging and un-Indian in terms of what is reflected about the broader postcolonial literary and critical environment, and how Vaid has challenged the limitations imposed by it. Firstly, the loci of Hindi critical authority are considered in their historical context, that is, the establishment of Hindi departments in universities, the way Hindi criticism developed in a context heavily influenced by a nationalist agenda, and the reluctance among authoritative Hindi critics to adjust literary critical tools to engage with modern Hindi fiction. Secondly, the idea that obscenity or vulgarity is a basis on which to reject Vaid's literature will be considered in terms of what charges of obscenity reflect with regard to the concept of Indianness, and the unspoken, but salient boundaries which Vaid has been accused of overstepping. The idea that obscenity or so-called 'carnivalesque promiscuity' is not appropriate in the Indian context and reflects an obsession with Western immorality is explored. Thirdly, the influence of progressive ideas regarding the importance of social purpose in literature and realism as the predominating literary model in Hindi criticism will be explored with regard to accusations that Vaid's literature is not socially useful. Fourthly the anxiety of Western influence and the absence in Hindi fiction of a tradition of experiment will be considered with regard to accusations that Vaid's literature is overly imitative and 'too Western'. Each section follows the same pattern, that is, establishment of context which has supported the negative criticisms described, followed by examples of the criticism levelled at Vaid in each category, and Vaid's views and rebuttal regarding each topic.

The loci of authority in Hindi criticism and 'A picture of the Hindi critic'

An understanding of the environment from which 'modern' Hindi criticism sprang is critical in terms of contextualizing criticism of Vaid's fiction and also his utter disregard for the Hindi critical environment and the associated voices of authority. To understand the features of Hindi criticism discussed with regard to Indianness, social-purpose and imitation from the West, a sketch is provided below of the establishment of Hindi departments and the way in which Hindi critics entrenched themselves as voices of authority in the colonial context. The strong link between the establishment of Hindi departments (and their associated curricula) and the nationalist agenda of promulgating a very specific and highly Sanskritized style of "Hindi" had a significant impact on Hindi criticism well into the postcolonial period.

When the first two Hindi departments were established at Benaras Hindu University (1922) and Allahabad University (1926) (Orsini 2002, 105), the first lecturers were from the Kāśī Nāgarī Prachāriṇī Sabhā, one of whom was Ramchandra Shukla. Ramchandra Shukla was heavily involved with the Sabhā, and became one of the most authoritative voices in Hindi literary criticism. Significantly, his book *Hindī Sahitya kā Itihās* (Śukla [1929] 1988) is still a widely read Hindi literary history textbook used in universities both in India and abroad. There was a strong connection between the university Hindi departments and organisations which had been established for the promulgation of Hindi as part of the assertion of national identity. Orsini has discussed the role of Ramchandra Shukla and Lal Bhagvān Dīn, and their connections with the Sabhā and suggests that, despite not having any university qualifications, they came 'to occupy a seat of official literary authority' (Orsini 2002, 106).

The highly politicised background of the academics appointed to positions of literary authority in Hindi departments had significant ramifications for the way in which Hindi literature was taught, and the style of Hindi literary production that was endorsed. Shukla's influence was significant, and he was critical of the *Chāyāvādī* (romanticism) movement in 1930s, his main charge against it being that it was 'artificial and foreign inspired' (S. Das 1995, 202). Wakanker confirms the significance of Shukla's influence and the strong identification of Hindi language with the assertion of the 'Hindu' nation which had been established:

> When Ramchandra Shukla (1884-1941), perhaps the most influential Hindi critic of all time, began writing his major essays in the late 1920s, the battle for Hindi against the claims of Urdu had already been won. The identification of the Hindi language with the idea of a homogeneously "Hindu" nation had been decisively established. For some decades, the rapid development of the Hindi canon, in which Shukla himself played a salient role, and the inclusion of Hindi in school and college curricula had been established fact. (Wakanker 2002, 987)

The school and college Hindi curriculum was heavily influenced by Shukla and his contemporaries (including the strong influence of the literary establishments from which they came) with a significant focus on medieval literature, and little emphasis on experimentation in literature or contemporary fiction. Orsini discusses the difficulties this created for experimental authors:

> ...fiction, as well as contemporary poetry had no part in the curriculum. The tension between the canonical and the contemporary is, of course, not peculiar to Hindi. But with modern Hindi being a tradition "in the making", choices made in academia had immediate reverberations in the literary sphere. They made the issue of literary authority all the more irksome for contemporary experimentators, particularly in the absence of widespread popularity as a counterbalance. (Orsini 2002, 108)

The Hindi literary establishments and the university departments had significant impact in creating a style of criticism which was anchored to cultural and linguistic nationalism and this influence continued to affect Hindi criticism well into the postcolonial period, the 'Hindi' agenda even more pronounced in the aftermath of Indian independence. Orsini has discussed the way in which Hindi education became 'a secret door' through which cultural nationalism could be asserted:

> The transmission of literary knowledge through education thus ensured the acquisition of a 'pure' linguistic and cultural identity. The success of the Hindi intelligentsia in imposing such a syllabus was dense with other cultural and political consequences, both during the nationalist struggle and after Independence: Hindi education became a 'secret door' through which cultural nationalism could enter the colonial system, but it also imposed a

> rigid linguistic and cultural ideal that was to survive undisturbed even in independent India. (Orsini 2002, 122)

Alok Rai has also discussed the deleterious effects the education system and the propagation of 'Hindi' have had (and still has) in terms of the development of Hindi and the 'construction of cultural memory in the Hindi region'. He discusses 'Hindi' as a 'radioactive poison' which 'vitiates the relationship between writers and their publics' and 'corrupts taste and conduces towards the propagation of dangerous cultural values' (Rai 2000, 119).

The emphasis early critics placed on Sanskrit poetics as the only legitimate way to critique Hindi fiction, was very slow to change, and critics did not modify their critical approach as new genres of literature entered the Hindi literary scene, most notably the novel and short story genres. Pandey has discussed the heavy-handed use of Sanskrit poetics in modern Hindi criticism and suggests that the critics who followed Shukla were equally committed to moralistic and formalistic approaches and Rasa style criticism[47] (I. Pandey 1975, 210). Pandey also discusses this problem in Hindi criticism and the reluctance of Hindi critics to evolve 'a new set of more viable principles to assess the quality of the results of changing sensibilities' (I. Pandey 1975, 205). The emphasis on this style of criticism and the role of university departments in promulgating it led to a paucity of what could legitimately be called 'modern' Hindi criticism. In an interview between Sukrita Paul Kumar and prominent Hindi critic Namwar Singh, Kumar asks Singh:

> Are the university departments consciously making efforts to rectify or sort out critical norms and standards?

To which Singh replies:

> None whatsoever. In the West, criticism is perpetually developing. University departments become centres of criticism, in which critical approaches are evolved. In our case literature departments seem to be limited to teaching, examination, etc. Perhaps one reason why modern literature is not popular is that there is no live involvement in what's been

[47] Rasa-Dhvani theory is part of the formalistic Sanskrit theory of aesthetics. Rasa refers to the sentiments and dhvani to the suggested meaning of a work. The central concern of Rasa-Dhvani theory is to form an assessment of stated and suggested (the reader's affective response) meanings (Rayan 2002, 3-4). For more detailed discussion see the complete essay by Krishna Rayan entitled '*Rasa-Dhvani* and Present-day Literary Theory' (in Rayan 2002, 1-29). See also Devy (2002).

> currently happening in literature. There are old established ideas which are conveniently handed over from one generation to another without any critical reviewing. There is in fact a clear aversion to modern literature perhaps because it involves fresh thinking and a different orientation. I'd say that the role of the universities in the literary criticism amounts to nil. (Singh in S.P. Kumar 1989, 94-95)

Singh identifies here a view of Hindi critics as unable to move away from moralistic, culturally essentialist criticism, and as doing little, if anything, to support the development or criticism of modern Hindi literature. Vaid has made a number of comments regarding his utter disregard for Hindi critics, and goes as far as to say Hindi literature would be better off without them. In the following quote, he attacks Hindi critics for the constant emphasis on Sanskrit poetics as a legitimate way of analysing modern genres:

> It is no wonder, then, that the scholar of Indian aesthetics should be beguiled into the temptation of at least expressing the hope that the theories, for instance, of *Rasa* and *Dhvani* should be applicable to the consideration of Indian literature including the novel. My point is that he should go further than this and put his conjectures to an actual test. Until then, I consider it safe to take refuge in plain common sense. And from that unacademic corner I see a wide gulf between traditional aesthetic values and the modern Indian novel. (Vaid 1965, 159)

Portrayed above is the emphasis critics such as Ramchandra Shukla and his successors placed on medieval literature, and Orsini has argued that Shukla and his colleagues had little interest in the period beyond the medieval, and were particularly reluctant to support or engage with modern Hindi prose (see also Schomer 1983). It has been argued throughout the thesis that one of the tensions in the postcolonial environment was how best to create a style of modernity that was both Indian and modern. The idea of tradition as having a negative impact was discussed in some detail in Chapter Three, around the idea of how Vaid described Indian forbears as a pile of rotting corpses. The following excerpt from Vaid demonstrates the continuation of the emphasis on medieval literature which scholars such as Orsini have spoken of:

> This exalted view of Tradition, useful as it may be for an understanding of our glorious Past, is singularly inimical to an understanding of our Present. Once we surrender ourselves to the beguiling consolations offered by this view—and there is no denying its partial validity—we are prevented from any evaluation or analysis of any modern art or activity except to the extent of an impassioned condemnation of all that has happened since medieval times. I have mentioned this view because of my conviction that in several insidious ways it has its hold on most of us. (Vaid 1965, 160-161)

It should be noted here that the argument is not that Vaid challenged the idea of Indian 'tradition' per se, rather that it was the way certain traditions had a hold over literary production and criticism, and how this, in his opinion, served to retard literary development.

In the following two examples, Vaid offers more explicit, and characteristically witty, descriptions of the Hindi critic, as incompetent, naïve, and unable to adjust to changing times.

> In the discussion of the earlier novelists he adopts a naïve approach according to which the origin and the quality—this latter often dubious—of the influence itself are a sufficient proof of the lasting literary merit of the author and work supposed to have been influenced. In the evaluation of the important struggling younger novelists, he adopts a frown according to which all of them are derivative and imitative. He has never learnt, in short, to examine the intricate mechanics of literary influences upon a genuine writer. But let me not talk of the Indian critic beyond this desperate wish that he had better not be there at all, for he lacks the essential qualities even of a most elementary nature necessary for his task. (Vaid 1965, 162)

In *Hindī alocak kī ek tasvīr* (A picture of the Hindi critic), originally written in 1986, and published in a collection of essays entitled *Śikast kī Āvāz* in 2006, Vaid offers the following caustic description of the Hindi critic:

> ...There is the radiance of a supernatural [*alokik*] inertia on his face, the attraction of worldly doctrines [*siddhanton*] in his eyes, in his right hand, a withered garland, in his left a bent and broken knife; there is red tape hanging from his neck which could be an old-fashioned necktie or a new

> fashioned sacred thread. After all, the rest of his attire is definitely Indian, but with that are various foreign patches crowded like butterflies and wasps of various kinds; and from his shoulder a filthy bag is swinging...His capacity to gossip is matchless, which he uses not only in his criticism which defies dharma, but also in his conversation...He gives great status to the author instead of the work, and more to himself than to the author. He accepts praise and cheating simply as his duty...If there is any objection [to his criticism] then he gives the faulty reasoning that: in the same way as our traditional physicians would look at a person and make a diagnosis, then in that same way, without reading the book we can tell the gist of the writing and are able to tell how outstanding it is and the capabilities of the author, we are able to see that clearly just by skimming through our favourite writings...he has no concern with the form and essence of the work, but has profound animosity the author, both the sound and silence of the work are negligible to him because that voice is deaf; the originality and difficulty of the work in his view, are deep defects...In order to change this picture of the Hindi critic it is necessary that his withered bouquet, his bent and broken knife, his unrivalled laziness, his worldly doctrines and his filthy bag should be snatched away from him—let him keep the red tape around his neck as a souvenir, with the hope that someday he will throw it off himself....It should be explained to him that he should learn to take pleasure in a work with true humility...that the work is always bigger than the author, that the essence of a work is always an inseperable part of its form, that he will not be made a learned critic by giving long, excruciating quotations and citing big names. (Vaid 2006, 121-123)

It is not difficult to see how Vaid's aboslute honesty and unrelenting criticism has earnt him few friends in the Hindi critical environment. The point I make however, is that both Vaid's fiction and non-fiction works provide commentary on the aesthetic as well as socio-political contexts of the period, which to date has been largely unexplored.

The historical background of the development of Hindi literary criticism as tied to outmoded Sanskrit models and unwilling to engage with 'modern' Hindi fiction has heavily influenced criticism of Vaid's work. Underpinning postcolonial

Hindi criticism were ideas that the proof of the calibre of a piece of fiction was the extent to which it could be proved to be 'authentic', 'Indian' and socially useful. In his book *After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism*, G.N. Devy discusses what he considers to be the features of the crisis in literary criticism in India:

> [A] proliferation of non-productive commentaries on Western critical positions and thinkers; lack of initiative in modifying critical concepts, tools and criteria in the process of importation; inappropriate use of critical terminology developed in the West, mostly out of its original context, in an undisciplined way and without sufficient justification to use it; lack of scholarly material to support critical pursuits—want of literary biographies, bibliographies, translations of Indian and foreign works, editorial scholarship and relevant critical debate; inability to relate literature to other arts, the media and social and cultural phenomena; uncritical and uninformed attitudes to influence; absence of self-awareness and of tradition; arbitrary and mostly alien critical standards. (Devy 1995, 10)

In addition to the general tendencies outlined by different scholars above, another factor which significantly influenced the Hindi literary environment was the role played by the government in its patronage of the arts. The Lalit Kala Akademi (inaugurated 1954), Sahitya Akademi (1954) and Sangeet Natak Akademi (Academy of Music and Theatre) (1953), are institutions which patronise the arts in India, and have been discussed by Sambrani in terms of their role in fostering certain kinds of artistic production which conform to ideas regarding national identity. Discussing the way this impacted on the art scene in India, Sambrani outlines how the Lalit Kala Akademi continues to support the idea of invoking the nation through art practice:

> It is true that artists of the Calcutta Group or the PAG [Progressive Artists' Group] no longer felt the need to make overt formal references to Indian traditions, choosing instead to align themselves with Cubist and Expressionist tendencies. These artists had however, by no means given up on the notion of representing 'India' in all its guises through their paintings...The institutions of this new nation, the Lalit Kala Akademi in

particular, continue to support this invocation of the nation through their evaluations and awards. (Sambrani 2005, 135-136)

These concerns are discussed by Stephen Alter in the literary context, where he points to the role of the Sahitya Akademi and its main purpose as, 'to bring together India's regional writers under a common umbrella of nationhood' (S. Alter 1998, 18). The consequence of this was that the Akademi privileged literature which served this purpose and became 'nothing more than a tangled bureaucracy, more interested in patronage and petty politics than fostering genuine literary efforts' (S. Alter 1998, 18).

The problem of the heavy influence of politics in the evaluation of Indian literature is particularly pertinent in the case of the denial of the Shalaka Samman literary award to Vaid in 2010, as mentioned in the first paragraph of this thesis. One of the main concerns of prominent author Ashok Vajpeyi regarding the denial of the award was the interference of bureaucrats and politicians in literary affairs, and that this government interference discredited the autonomy of the Hindi Academy (Vajpeyi in Sinha 2010). What is significant in this case is that the State's intrusion into literary affairs which Alter and Sambrani have identified during earlier parts of the twentieth century, can be seen to persist into the present. It is also important to note that the main charge against Vaid which came from political quarters was that his literature was 'pornographic.' The conservative approach of Hindi critics and political institutions regarding perceived obscenity and sexual taboo is one of the anxieties in the postcolonial context that Vaid has provoked. In the following section boundaries are discussed regarding what constitutes 'acceptable' fiction regarding sex and the erotic, and the concomitant charges of obscenity and pornography which follow when a writer is seen to have crossed those boundaries. The conservative approach regarding sex, obscenity and so-called transgression is strongly linked with constructions of Indianness, and this continues to influence criticism of modern Indian literature.

Obscenity and the boundaries of 'moral' acceptability

While in the context of international modernism, there was a much greater emphasis on the 'art-for-art's sake' model and the metaphysical dimensions of sex and sexuality, in the Indian context there were still parameters regarding what was deemed 'acceptable' and what was not. The Kāma Sūtra, the erotic sculptures at

Khajuraho, and eroticism in Sanskrit literature, are often cited as evidence that India has not always been prohibitive when it comes to matters of sex and sexuality. However, there is evidence to suggest that a certain conservatism regarding depictions of sexual acts developed in the Indian environment in relation to colonialism and the nationalist struggle. As well as the desire to put forward Indian women as bearers of morality and tradition, which has been discussed by Chatterjee (Chatterjee 1993), and referred to in Chapters Two and Three, there has also historically been a Hindu view of sexual licentiousness as connected to the Mughal period and Muslims. In Chapter Three mention was made of one arena in which this view surfaced with regard to the relationship between Hindi and Urdu, and the Urdu language itself being language of harlots, which has been discussed by Alok Rai (Rai 2000). This identification of sexual licentiousness and 'deviant' sexuality became increasingly linked with the Hindu nationalist view of the 'other,' and is intentionally constructed in the colonial and postcolonial period to both create an 'other' which can be vilified, but also a self, that can represent restraint, purity and assert a moral high ground. The following articulates the role nationalism played in the colonial and pre-colonial period in India with regard to Victorian attitudes toward sex and sexuality:

> Paradoxically, just as the emerging Indian nationalist bore the mark of Western conceptions of nationalism, so too did the reconstituted space of Indian sexuality bear more than a slight resemblance to Victorian sexuality. The idea of sex and sexuality as a dangerous corrupting force, to be carefully contained at all costs within family and marriage, was as Victorian as it was Indian. But, within the emerging fantasy of the nation, the chastity and purity of Indian women, by which this dangerous and contaminating force was controlled, came to represent not only the purity of Indian culture but also its superiority to the culture of the Empire. (R. Kapur 2000-2001, 339)

It is argued that in the case of Indian literary modernism there still remained boundaries of acceptability which provoked hostility and rejection on the basis that transgressive sexual acts were perceived to be un-Indian and promote a style of Western debauchery. The Hindi literary establishment—largely situated in Hindi departments and institutions designed for the promulgation of Hindi which have

been discussed above—had a culturally essentialist view regarding sex and sexuality and this cultural essentialism has had a significant effect on the reception, or rejection, of a number of works in Hindi/Indian literary history. For example, one of the criticisms levelled against *Chāyāvād* poets in the 1920s and 1930s by the Hindi literary establishment was that it was 'obscene', and the young poets were 'unhealthy and sexually obsessed' (Schomer 1983, 97). Schomer discusses the way the Hindi literary establishment, particularly those reared by Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi, were highly critical of the *Chāyāvād* poets, and as well as finding their literature 'obscene', accused them of social deviance and aloofness (Schomer 1983, 102). This is one example of the way the Hindi literary establishment, located primarily in institutions for the promulgation of 'Hindi' such as the Kāśī Nāgarī Prachāriṇī Sabhā and Hindi university departments, heavily influenced ideas regarding what constituted 'acceptable' literature, and notions of obscenity and lack of social purpose.

In the pre-Independence period, the publication in 1927 of Ugra's *Chaklet*, provoked considerable hostility, and efforts were made for over a decade to have the book banned. Gupta has described the context of *Chaklet*, and the role the Hindi establishment played in constructing it as morally deviant:

> Pandey Becan Sharma 'Ugra's' book *Chaklet* published in 1927...dealt with issues of sodomy, sexual acts between adult males and adolescent boys, and other aspects of male homosexuality...The guardians of morality launched militant criticism against the book...Such works were referred to as 'ghasleti sahitya,' and a movement against it was sustained for 12 years. Banarsidas Chaturvedi, the editor of the Calcutta Hindi monthly *Vishal Bharat*, took the lead, and was largely backed by the new Hindi loci of authority—university departments, literary associations and important journals. In UP, the magazines *Chand* and *Sudha* published material against such literature, and associations like Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha adopted resolutions against these books...Ugra wrote on a taboo subject, an unmentionable act, and spoke the unspeakable. The critics claimed that the actual effect of Ugra's writings was to titillate and excite his readers and thus to encourage, not discourage, homosexual desire. (Gupta 2002, 198-199)

Significantly in the case of Ugra's fiction, Gupta outlines the fact that those most concerned with having the literature banned came from the Hindi departments and Hindi organisations, as it did not conform to their ideas about what constituted appropriate and morally 'acceptable' Hindi literature. One of my key arguments with regard to perceived obscenity in Hindi literature (specifically Vaid's fiction) is that it is not the incidence of sexual acts or sexualities per se that provokes rejection, but the style of sexual act that is discussed. Generally speaking, sexual acts which are part of exploring intimacy and loving relationships and which demonstrate a 'purpose' are not criticised in the same way as sexual acts of pleasure, boredom or distraction.

This point can be further explored by considering the situation surrounding the arrest of prominent author Mridula Garg in 1980 on charges of obscenity for her novel *Chittocobra*. Garg's arrest, as well as confirming my argument about 'appropriate' sexual acts, is also another example of the role of the State in the arts. In 1980 Garg was arrested at her home for writing *Chittocobra*, and when she asked the police what she was being arrested for the response was that: 'pages 110-112 are obscene'. Garg describes the offending pages as dealing with:

> [T]he anguish of a woman, who is a mechanical participant in the sex act with her husband. It was imperative to give a graphic picture to delineate the essential dichotomy between the mind and the body during intercourse and orgasm. But this very graphic treatment robbed it of erotica, rendering it tedious perhaps but certainly not titillating. (Garg 2010)

Further, Garg argues that the reason for her arrest was not that she included a sex scene, but that it was the fact that the woman having sex was bored and emotionally uninvolved in the sexual act. Curiously, critic Jaidev, who has been discussed with regard to his attack on Vaid's literature, also has a chapter in his book *The Culture of Pastiche* devoted to the fiction of Mridula Garg. In an essay critiquing the book, Chaman Lal suggests that '[t]he real sting of Jaidev's analysis...appears in chapters relating to the works of Mridula Garg and Krishan Baldev Vaid.' (Lal 1998, 99). Jaidev's comments on *Cittocobra* saying, 'like her heroines the author (Mridula Garg) lacks a visible culture definition,' and goes on to refer to *Chittocobra* as being 'the culture of pastiche in all its horror' (Jaidev in Lal 1998, 99). The Garg example, as well as demonstrating that cultural

essentialism is still alive in the assessment of Indian fiction, is also an example of the persistence of the State actions in the 'moral policing' of literature.

With regard to Vaid's literature, this 'moral policing' can be seen in a number of the attacks against his literature on the basis that it is obscene or vulgar. The denial of the award to Vaid based on his fiction being 'pornographic' is one such example, and illustrates, as I have already discussed the heavy influence of a statist culture in literary affairs. The 'moral policing' of both Mridula Garg and Vaid can be seen as an illustration of '[t]he state's interest in defining the limits of legitimate sexuality, in upholding codes of sexual propriety and in punishing deviance' that Uberoi (1996, xix) has discussed in the introduction to *Social reform, sexuality and the state*.

Critic Jaidev has also been particularly harsh on Vaid regarding his manner of dealing with sex and other 'taboo' subjects. In Chapter Two in the context of the argument regarding Vaid's presentation of masturbation and transient physical relationships two quotes were provided which point to Jaidev's culturally essentialist views on Indian culture. To refresh, in the context of masturbation Jaidev accepted that masturbation and brothels exist in Indian society but argued that 'such aspects have not been legitimized in our culture because they clash with its other, more valued aspects', that Vaid did not demonstrate 'any involvement in, or commitment to, India or her culture,' and the instances in which Vaid discusses such matters 'have only a negative function' (Jaidev 1993, 138-139). In a quote used both here, and in the last section of this chapter regarding the anxiety of influence, Jaidev also attacks Vaid for celebrating the 'carnivalesque promiscuity' of the West as a cure for Indian ills:

> The real reason for Vaid's obsession with shocking details and graffiti lies not in his concern for Indian society but in his devotion to a 'liberated' kind of Western art. Since such things abound in it, Hindi literature should also celebrate them...Since, according to him, anything goes in the West, since there is no ban there on carnivalesque promiscuity, a similar liberation will solve all Indian problems. Western intertextuality and pastiche are the literary constituents of his panacea for all Indian ills. Such is his confidence in the correctness of his practice that he, through Bimal and other heroes, describes it as a revolution in Hindi literature. (Jaidev 1993, 140)

Jaidev's comments should be seen in the context of the critical trend referred to as 'nativism' and which has been discussed by Devy in *After Amnesia* (1995), a tendency about which much can be learned in the collection of articles in *Nativism: Essays in Criticism* (Paranjape 1997). One of the cornerstones on which nativist discussion is based is that writing is seen 'as a social act and expects of it an ethical sense of commitment to the society within which it is born' (Devy 1995, 120). In the preface of *Nativism,* the book's editor Makarand Paranjape applauds Jaidev's reading of Vaid's fiction as he says that Jaidev 'shows precisely how Vaid succumbs to a sort of cultural inferiority complex, which leads him gradually to denigrate the native culture from which he springs' (Paranjape 1997, x). For the purposes of this research it is critical that Jaidev be situated in his context as a nativist critic as it demonstrates his commitment to literature that is purposeful and ethical. Unfortunately, while there are some convincing discussions which form part of the nativist body of literature, there are also a number which use the idea that writing should be a social act to slip into a style of cultural essentialism that rejects literature on the basis that it is vulgar, or un-Indian. In the case of Jaidev's comments, it could be suggested that there is a strong sense of cultural essentialism implied in his attacks on Vaid, and a refusal to accept what Vaid writes as Indian, in the way that Jaidev defines authenticity and Indianness. The cultural essentialism which has influenced the denial of the award to Vaid—and also the comments made by Jaidev—is reflective of a hegemonic cultural pattern which has adversely affected Hindi literary criticism in the postcolonial period. Kapur has discussed how the dominant discourse (in this case regarding sex and sexuality) becomes exclusionary:

> Cultural essentialism (a stagnant, exclusive understanding of culture) is being deployed by those in a position of power and dominance to legitimate dominant sexual ideology. It is used to delegitimize those who are trying to challenge dominant sexual ideology and cultural authenticity...The longing for a strong cultural identity has been an important desire and symptom of post-colonialism in the contemporary Indian context. In the hands of dominant conservative groups, it is based on the idea of a substantive or real essentialism, and becomes reactionary. It becomes an exclusionary discourse—a tale shaped in the image of intolerance and disapproval of difference. (R. Kapur 2000-2001, 376-377)

In a final example of Vaid being attacked for his manner of dealing with so-called sexual transgression, some examples are provided below from an interview with Rajendra Yadav. In that interview he described Vaid using a slew of negative adjectival phrases including: 'wicked', 'a cynic', someone with 'sexual frustrations', 'obsessed with sex', 'obsessed with libido', and that 'the base of his writing is libido, even women come as an extension of his libido' and that while Yadav considers himself a bold writer he was not prepared to publish *Bimal Urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ* through fear that it would reflect on his institution as being vulgar.

> Never before has there been writing like that in Hindi, but for Ugra in the 40s writing about gays, and Gandhi intervened. Ugra insinuated whereas Vaid wrote explicitly. Certain four-letter words he used are taboo and can't be printed. (Interviewed on 26 May 2003).

Each of these comments was made in the context of a discussion which Yadav had started by asking if I knew why there was a 'conspiracy of silence' around Vaid and his literature. What is particularly interesting in this situation is that Yadav is one of the authors who came out in protest regarding the denial of the award to Vaid and, in a telling statement in the interview, said he liked Vaid's writing and that 'Vaid is very bold and uninhibited, but what do we get out of it except for enjoyable reading?' (Interviewed on 26 May 2003). Yadav's position as a highly influential author and editor of *Haṁs* magazine needs to be reiterated here, as does his role as a 'progressive' writer. At the time when Vaid wrote Bimal (and the trilogy of short stories which proceeded it and are analysed in Chapters Two and Three), Yadav was not prepared to offer Vaid any kind of institutional backing. His overwhelming concern, at that time, was how it would reflect on the institution. The double bind is that at the same time as attacking the fiction and Vaid as vulgar and obsessed with sex, Yadav acknowledges that there had been nothing like it in Hindi literature. His comments reflect the deep anxiety regarding the breaking of boundaries of acceptability and, as will be discussed further in the next section, an absolute commitment to the idea that literature needs to demonstrate a social purpose.

Prior to turning to a consideration of how Vaid views sex and the body in his fiction, a quote from Ashok Vajpeyi is provided regarding Vaid's poetics of transgression as unrivalled in Indian literature:

> An essential element of Vaid's fictional poetics is transgression. There are indeed few—not only in Hindi but in Indian fiction at large—who have so constantly transgressed the limits of form, language, social norms and morality. (Vajpeyi 2007)

What has been shown in the analysis in Chapter Two is that rather than being obsessed with sex, Vaid uses the sexual acts as a 'site' for the discussion of various existentially challenging themes. In all cases, we witnessed a commitment to exploring the depths of despair, boredom and loneliness of the characters, in a context where transgression was a distraction or diversion from fundamental questions. So how does Vaid respond to this style of criticism based on charges of obscenity and vulgarity?

> It is an obsession *of* the body not an obsession *with* the body. This is an important distinction...Finally, once again it is important to be clear, there is no obsession with the body or sex in my novels. It is not that I am against sex in literature, but in my own work I use the body and sex not in the context of Hedonism, but in the context of a vast ambivalence. (Vaid 2002b, 31)

This is a highly significant comment as in the analysis provided in Chapter Two, it was argued that the masculinity of the main character Bimal was a much more uncertain, ambivalent style of masculinity than that of the more macho male figures in the coffeehouse. The analysis showed in that context that the examples of masturbation and transient sexual relationships were more indicative of a deep existential crisis, and demonstrated the utter hopelessness, boredom, terror and despair of Bimal as a postcolonial individual. Boredeom and distraction were discussed as more salient features of the literature than the transgressive acts. The point being that sexual 'transgression', was symptomatic of much larger and more insoluble problems, those that characterised the postcolonial condition itself. This is confirmed both in Vaid's comments and my analysis of his fiction.

In *Javāb Nahīṁ*, Vaid discusses the three main areas on which he focusses when writing a story, that is, honesty, courage and stylistics. With regard to courage he discusses how far one must go in order to demonstrate courage, 'will you write a story about stench and filth with a handkerchief over your nose, or will you write it while standing in its midst (Vaid 2002b, 61). This statement is relevant

both as part of a discussion about prohibition in Hindi literature regarding obscenity, but also regarding the problem Vaid sees regarding Hindi authors writing literature which is overly sentimental and does not reflect the harsh realities of the subject matter. The idea that Vaid has written fearlessly and uncompromisingly and that particularly with regard to sex and obscenity he has refused to bow to pressure to tone down his writing has been discussed substantially in this thesis. The following example demonstrates how Vaid's contemporaries viewed him as trampling on the 'sanctity' of Indian culture and that his writings were not well received in the postcolonial environment. The main point is that this demonstrates the postcolonial anxieties discussed regarding what it means to be both Indian and modern. In Vaid's case, he was seen as someone who overstepped the unspoken boundaries:

> Misinformation and silence about me on the part of the Hindi mainstreamers was deliberate, it seems to me, and out of a sense of insecurity because implicitly my work more than my statements (of which there weren't many) was a radical critique of many notions and values and sanctities that they and their work subscribed to. And some of them often said to me—you are destroying what we hold sacrosanct. So their way of counteracting was misrepresentation and neglect. I responded with a taciturn persistence in following my path. And now, belatedly, there is some sluggish appreciation of what I have done (email comm., 22 April 2007).

This crossing of boundaries regarding obscenity and sanctity was one of the main reasons Vaid had such difficulty getting *Bimal urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ* published. In discussion with Meenakshi Mukherjee, Vaid outlined the problems he had in publishing the highly controversial novel:

> You see, the publisher who had given me the contract wanted me to make certain modifications in my text to forestall what he thought would be the legal problems. He also had some reservations about what he thought was an excessive irreverence toward religion, particularly Hinduism, and 'obscenity'. I flatly refused to make any changes whatsoever if publication of the book was contingent upon those changes. The contract was cancelled. There are of course some more unsavoury details which I won't inflict on you. After that every other Hindi publisher I approached turned the book

> down to the accompaniment of some meaningless murmurs about its merit and doubts about its accessibility to the common reader. (Mukherjee 1973, 9)

What is important to note here is that once one publisher had turned it down, many others followed. While the Hindi literary establishment could not ultimately silence Vaid, they made enormous efforts to see that the book was not published. I suggest here that this is one very real example of the 'conspiracy of silence' regarding Vaid's literature with regard to perceived obscenity. This silencing effect is significant as it demonstrates the wide circuit of agreement over the issue of 'obscenity' and transgression of the 'norms' of Indian culture. This circuit joined together different parts of Indian society, including the state, literary critics, novelists, and book publishers.

Progressive influence, social purpose and 'reality'

In the development of modernism in Hindi literature, and the proliferation of the *nayī kahānī* genre as one forum where modernist aesthetics were explored there was also significant influence from the progressive movement and communist/Marxist politics. In Chapter One, discussion was based on how the progressive movement in Hindi literature impacted on the way modernism was adapted in the Hindi literary environment. Discussion also pointed to the significant ramifications this had for the styles of modernism which were perceived as genuinely Indian, or supportive of the postcolonial struggle to fashion a style of modernity that was both Indian and modern. The strong progressive influence on modern Hindi literature continued throughout the *nayī kahānī* period. The combined history of Hindi critics emphasizing Sanskrit poetics as the only legitimate form of criticism, and the strong communist-progressive influence, meant that Hindi literature continued to be primarily valued in terms of the extent to which it could be deemed 'socially useful' and ideologically 'committed' to communist sensibilities. Geeta Kapur points to the confluence of progressivism and modernism as follows:

> Something like a slogan of national in form, socialist in content is built into the programme. Thus while it is modern and in the Indian context also avantgarde, the movement represents itself as realist and progressive and

> tilts the definitional balance of Indian modernism. This obviously prevents it from trying out more daring formal innovations. (G. Kapur 2000, 302)

With the development of the *nayī kahānī* short story trend, a marked shift in the style of writing is evident, as well as in the subjects which *nayī kahānī* authors chose to focus on. As a result of the paucity of modern critical sensibility, many *nayī kahānī* writers became their own critics, or the critics of their own coterie of authors. This meant that the *nayī kahānī* movement became associated with cliques, infighting and self-serving criticism. Roadarmel discusses this with regard to the Hindi critical environment of the 1950s and 1960s:

> Division rather than union seems more common in Hindi literary circles...Perhaps the Hindi literary circle is too small, the competition too severe, the market and readership too limited. Recognition too often seems to come to writers because they have the right connections rather than because they write the best works. With university circles often being uninterested in contemporary Hindi literature, and writers being editors of many of the literary journals, critical writing frequently becomes the province of the writers themselves or of critics identified with particular groups of writers. (Roadarmel 1969, 58)

With the emphasis the progressive writers placed on social purpose, there came a concomitant emphasis on bringing to light 'subaltern' voices. One of the outcomes of this was that there was a strong focus on subject based literature. In this context Dalit writing and women's writing came to the fore and were legitimized as 'authentic', 'realistic' and served the progressive cause. In an interview Rajendra Yadav commented that:

> Dalit writing and women's writing are more articulate, genuine and authentic, they are carrying literature forward. We are not accustomed to Dalit and women's literature but we need to come out of the shell and understand our conditioning, and acquire a taste for the illiterate style of writing, Taste is always acquired. Just as at first, black writing was hard to stomach. It takes time to get a taste for marginalised writing. (Interviewed on 26 May 2003)

This quote from Yadav, emphasizes the view that 'marginalized' writing had, and to a large degree continues to have, significant currency in meeting the objectives of a modernizing India. The critical link which Yadav makes is that 'Dalit and women's writing are more articulate, *genuine* and *authentic'* (emphases my own) and that this by definition means that they have the task of carrying literature forward. It is argued that while these literatures are an immensely valuable part of Indian literature, they also serve the politics of the progressive cause very effectively. Authenticity then, is judged on what the writing is about, and who it represents, not on the basis of literary form or style. Indu Prakash Pandey has also linked the progressive writers with a commitment to communist party lines and identified how this effectively eliminated certain authors from literary view:

> Slowly and gradually the progressive critics developed a wide range of rules which could eliminate some of the best modern progressive poets because their works did not help the cause of the party. These progressive writers and critics succeeded in awakening a sense of social consciousness but in this attempt they put an end to their own power. (I. Pandey 1975, 212)

Furthermore, the literary magazine *Haṁs* has been a significantly influential forum for modern Hindi literature and has always been connected with the progressive cause. In Chapter One mention was made that *Haṁs* was founded and edited by Premchand in the first instance, and has had a succession of progressive writers at its helm since its inception. The role the magazine has had in preferencing literature that meets the needs of the progressive cause is significant. Rajendra Yadav, as editor of *Haṁs* since 1986 and a contemporary of Vaid's, has been in a position of power regarding which literature he chooses to publish and which he rejects, this is one reason why it would be very rare indeed to see Vaid's fiction feature in a magazine such as *Haṁs*. Literary magazines such as *Haṁs* played a significant role in informing literary tastes and in establishing canons of Hindi literature (Das, 1995:23). *Haṁs* as a magazine which has relatively high readership has been in a position of power in preferencing certain types of literature over others. Voices such as Yadav's have, unfortunately, had a significant impact on the creation of, and maintenance of, the 'conspiracy of silence' to which Vaid referred.

The role of Rajendra Yadav as a progressive writer and a number of his comments regarding Vaid's fiction as not meeting the 'needs' of the modern Indian nation have already been discussed so the point will not be laboured. It is enough to say that Yadav's views regarding the purpose of literature as needing to address 'the suffering, the struggle or the dream' so as to carry the nation forward leaves no room for works that do not fulfil this objective. It should be noted here, that these ideas reflect Yadav's views, the magazine *Haṁs*—now at least—does publish a wide variety of stories that do not necessarily fall under the 'progressive' label.

Another salient feature of the progressive influence on Hindi fiction was the emphasis on reality and socialist realism as a predominant genre well into the modernist period. The following two quotes, the first by prominent author Giriraj Kishor, demonstrate the emphasis on reality in Hindi fiction and the way in which fiction which was not seen to demonstrate this reality, was construed negatively:

> Baldev Krishna Vaid took a new departure towards the minutiae of the entire language. In spite of his writing being prose, it creates a feeling of a vast kind of ambiguity and several times his language dominates over the literary work itself. This might be an achievement from the point of view of language, but several times there is a very serious danger that reality becomes secondary. (Kišor 1997, 32)

On the topic of reality, Jaidev also criticizes Vaid. Note that Jaidev is complimentary regarding Vaid's first novel *Uskā Bacpan*, on the basis that it was realistic, and that it is Vaid's more avante-garde fiction that he finds problematic.

> He started his writing career with impressive works, including the novel *Uska Bachpan* (1957) and several realistic stories in which he confidently and purposively adapts Western codes. These works are formally impressive and firmly rooted in society and culture. But his later, *avant-garde*, works are very different: they have very little reality about them. Although they are cluttered with Western codes, the latter are wholly debased and flattened. (Jaidev 1993, 130)

Interestingly, of all of his fiction, *Uskā Bacpan* has been the novel which has been most widely acclaimed. I suggest that this is because it was earlier in Vaid's career,

and was more in-step with the style of writing which was deemed 'good' in the postcolonial period.

In an interview with Vaid regarding the influence of progressivism on the Hindi literary scene, he discussed the heavy presence of Soviet-style progressivism and organized residue of Marxism, which, he noted, repeated 'the same nonsense that literature should have a social conscience'. Further, the heavily content-oriented atmosphere meant that any concern with style is seen as an impediment to readers (Interviewed on 23 May 2003). In his characteristically witty style he also commented that the content-based approach to Hindi literature could be seen in the focus on Dalit and women's literature and joked that it would be better called 'dull-lit' literature. (Interviewed on 23 May 2003) His argument regarding the problem of having a heavily content based approach to literature is that it creates a void in the reader's consciousness, in which content is routinely privileged over formal innovation. In one of few critical pieces written by Vaid in English, Vaid referred specifically to Rajendra Yadav, and his story *Pratīkśā* saying:

> He often mistakes what he considers new themes for new stories. In an effort to shock, he recently produced an enormously boring story about lesbianism. (Vaid 1969, 506)

Vaid's unstinting indictment of the intrusion of the heavy-handed influence of progressive and Marxist ideology in Hindi literature and criticism in the postcolonial period is captured in the following quote. Here, Vaid discusses the progressive influence as having deleterious effects on the development of irony in Hindi fiction, and the closely related problem of realism as a predominating literary model:

> For decades, so-called progressive misguided zeal has been weighing on us in such a bad way that ironic vision has never been able to flourish at all. Even now when the progressive zeal is being destroyed around the world, on the basis of those ideas the pretentiousness and dream are ruined, in our country there is still the negative overwhelming influence of those prejudices...in my view the modern Hindi story is not that modern... There are only two main voices of it—one of the loud sloganeer, the other of the choked voice excessively sentimental. It still hasn't become free from the

> neat and tidy healthy romantic realism and its exhausted empty concessions. Yes, some authors and stories in the middle of these voices have achieved their ironic voice also, but the number of people who listen to it and understand them is very much less. I accept this situation is the misfortune of my literature. (Vaid 2006, 226)

In addition to explicitly stating the limitations of the environment in which he writes, Vaid also indicates in the last sentence that this has had a significant effect on the reception of his literature. This sense that his relentless challenging of the dominant paradigms in Hindi literature has cost him a great deal in terms of recognition is reiterated in his collection of interviews and self-interviews titled *Javāb Nahīṅ*. What is important in each of these excerpts is that Vaid relentlessly challenges the idea that the predominant genre 'should be' realism, heavily influenced by progressivism. In his view, writers influenced by these trends offer a vulgarized form of 'reality', heavily influenced by prohibitions in how that reality should be presented:

> In our criticism, even now there is an emphasis on a very vulgarized form of propriety, which subject you should write on or not write on? How to write it and how not to write it? The prohibitions are not only about sex they are about hunger and poverty and filth as well. They are also about the husband and wife relationship. A writer must write as if he is wearing a mask. I have kept taking off that mask in my writing from the beginning. I don't want to take merit or credit for this matter but whatever discredit I have got for this, I want to refute it (laughs)...There are several writers who write only wearing a mask and perhaps that is why they get recognition quickly. Here in particular this tendency happens a lot more with the progressive writers. It can't be said whether this mask is worn knowingly or not knowlingly, consciously or unconsciously. (Vaid 2002b, 61)

Vaid argues that the almost exclusive focus on content, and the emphasis on the social, has stagnated Hindi criticism. Further, the reader will recall that in Chapter One the enormous influence of Premchand on the Hindi literary environment, and the role of Premchand as having had a permanent effect on literary taste and preferences was discussed. The 'canonization' of Premchand meant that socialist

realism continued as the main approach, and influenced the development of a modernist aesthetic in the Hindi sphere:

> This kind of uncritical sensibility has effectively curbed sound literary criticism in Hindi. It has kept in currency outdated distinctions between the social and the subjective, the healthy and the morbid, the Indian and the un-Indian, and so-on. It has been responsible for the widespread practice of evaluating the writer on the basis of content alone. Above all, it has sought to keep the ghost of Premchand alive mainly in order to discourage newness. It was in the shadow of this most dreadful dullness that a group of writers emerged in the middle and late fifties. Most of them were primarily short-story writers. (Vaid 1969, 504)

The reference to the short-story writers who emerged in the 1950s is clearly to *nayī kahānī* writers. While Vaid has been included in some *nayī kahānī* collections, and is historically placed within the *nayī kahānī* genre, he himself is careful to distance himself from the group, as a result of his genuine concern regarding what the group achieved:

> I did write in the phase of nayī kahānī but I was not really involved in that way in the *nayī kahānī* movement. I neither boasted nor gave any sermon about *nayī kahānī*. If these stories of the *nayī kahanī* period are read, then in my opinion they are very simple from the point of view of style, but from the point of view of their subject matter, they indeed are different from traditional Hindi short stories. (Vaid 2002b, 56-57)

This statement shows that Vaid distances himself from his Hindi literary contemporaries, and sees himself as achieving something quite distinct in terms of literary style. In the following section the anxiety of influence in Hindi fiction, and the tradition of experiment that Vaid sees himself as belonging to, but which has been largely absent in Hindi fiction, are considered.

Anxiety of influence and experimentalism

In multiple places in this thesis the issue of the anxiety of influence regarding the best way to incorporate influences from the West without being overly imitative has been discussed. In Chapter Three the centrality of the idea in the Nehruvian period that in order to progress, postcolonial India needed to utilize any lessons it

could from the industrialized West without falling into the trap of mere imitation was discussed. It was also shown that Nehru explicitly emphasized the need for India to retain her individuality without becoming a mere copy of the West. In Chapter Two Vaid's fiction which referred specifically to the tension around the distinction between what is genuine and what is artificial (mimicry) was discussed. In that context it was argued that Vaid used the example of the coffeehouse males discussing whether or not a woman's breasts were real or artificial to refer to deeper problems in the Indian social and literary context. In the analysis of Vaid's fiction in previous chapters examples where considered where Vaid problematized discourse regarding what is Indian (and orginal) and what is overly Western (imitative). In this section the question of how this discourse has affected criticism of Vaid's literature, as the inclination to prove that his work is derivative predominates over the ability to establish what he has achieved in terms of formal innovation. The notion that there are some kinds of influences which are deemed 'good' and others that are 'bad', is articulated by Harish Trivedi as follows:

> This discourse seems to divide predictably into two broad categories, of critics who find such influence everywhere, and of other critics who are either reluctant to see such influence or tend to play it down. However, what unites both the categories is their common concern with identifying what they implicitly or explicitly regard as 'good' and enabling influence, and distinguishing it from bad or sterile influence. (Trivedi 2007, 127)

There is a strong link between what is perceived as undue influence, or 'bad' influence and perceptions of Indianness. In Vaid's case, the literary style he developed, and the inspiration he received from the international literary and artistic milieu, were seen to compromise his Indianness, and to demonstrate that he had gone too far the 'American' way. I argue that the reason for such accusations is that in the postcolonial literary and artistic environment ideas regarding what constituted 'modern' arts, reflected a style of 'classicized modern' which Sambrani has discussed in relation to the Indian art world:

> There is a degree of selectiveness in their [Progressive Artists' Group] take on modernist European art that reveals a tendency towards the classical, that I believe is an instance of the recurrent 'classicising impulse' in modern

> Indian art. This is manifest in the way most, if not all, formal means assimilated by these artists have by that time, been accorded a place in the museums of Europe. Their status within the politics of European culture then, is not so much of oppositional, radical moves, but of objects, styles, material that have already been accepted as marks of high culture. (Sambrani 2005, 114)

The situation in Hindi literature closely mirrors Sambrani's observations *vis a vis* modern Indian art practice and it is argued that it is this 'classicising impulse' which Vaid objects to, preferring to style his literature on trends that were happening in Europe and the Americas at the time in which he wrote, not styles that had 'already been accepted as marks of high culture' in Europe. In this context, what becomes evident is that it is not that Vaid drew inspiration from the West per se, but that he drew from sources which had not been incorporated into the group of influences which had been canonized as 'good' and 'enabling'. Prominent author and long-time friend of Vaid's, Nirmal Verma, discussed the way in which Western influences have been regarded with suspicion in the Hindi environment and that there is a tendency to try to prove that literature is derivative, and that this has been a factor in retarding the development of the Hindi literary scene:

> The authentic, indigenous contribution of a short- story writer and how in an unconscious manner he has exposed himself to the Western writer, at times rather indiscriminately, are some important features that have not been formulated or identified clearly by the Hindi critics. I think the reason is that for a long time "influences" have been regarded as very suspicious and much of the criticism that has been done against the contemporary Indian writer is aimed at proving that even the best of the writing is derivative. Whether it has become a mere exercise in imitation or, as you've just said, there is a very creative sort of a confluence of the native and western sensibility, all this has not been worked out. This has obviously led to the impoverishment of the Indian critical scene. (Verma in S.P. Kumar, 1990, 13)

Vaid thus became an easy target regarding imitation and going 'too far' the Western way, on account of his long absences from India as an academic of English literature in America. Indeed, in a cutting comment, Krishna Sobti accused Vaid of

becoming overly comfortable with his American existence: 'It has been established that from the point of view of writing, your American exile agrees with you!' (Sobti and Vaid 2007, 50) In the same conversation with Vaid, she goes on to claim that his so-called exile is a 'high class strategy':

> In America you teach English, and boast of writing in Hindi... you have become a victim of American comfort....Friend, you know well that point on which your friends are sensitive... why don't you also say that the future of human life is only in America. The literary followers of the American view! (Sobti and Vaid 2007, 51).

The argument here is that charges of an over-use of inappropriate Western ideas and models (and therefore a lack of Indian ideas and models) reveal much more about the limitations of the Hindi critical environment than they do about whether or not Vaid's absences from India compromised his perceived 'Indianness'. It is argued that what Vaid achieved in terms of formal innovation was not generally well received in the Indian context of the time as it was unprecedented and unfamiliar and the Hindi critical environment, on the whole, did not see the value of literature of this nature.

The use of formal innovation was rejected not only as overly Western, but also as being a pastiche of Western authors and overly self-conscious:

> Krishna Baldev Vaid is an extremely self-conscious writer. His exhibition of pastiche suggests his principled commitment to that strain in modernism and postmodernism which emphasizes 'play-giarism' and *bricolage* as the basic principles of art...Self-consciousness in Vaid's later fictions, together with the massive erudition that supports it, constitutes a complication for a student of his work. He has to do enormous homework before hoping to say anything substantial about it. He has also to be constantly on his guard. So self-defensive is Vaid's irony, so foolproof his self-reflexivity, and so fortified his house of fiction, that one can seldom reproach him successfully. All criticisms are anticipated and pre-empted within the fictions themselves. (Jaidev 1993, 130-131)

The idea that he is too self-conscious was reiterated by both Rajendra Yadav and Krishna Sobti in interviews I held in 2003, Yadav stating that Vaid is 'too cerebral'

(Interviewed on 26 May 2003) and Sobti suggesting that he is 'too experimental' (Interviewed on 27 May 2003). In Sobti's view, Vaid's experimentalism has cost him a lot in terms of readership as his constant innovation in form mean that readers have to keep getting used to a new approach. Jaidev has also described Vaid as 'extremely self-conscious', 'artificial', hostile...to Indian culture', 'anti-culture stance', and 'caustic towards India' (Jaidev 1993, 130-134).

In terms of what Vaid actually achieved in Hindi with regard to the influence of a tradition of experiment which was unexplored in Hindi fiction, Vaid says that:

> The state of experiment in Hindi story literature is very pitiable. In every respect. There is the feeling that the Hindi novelist (novelist and short story writer) is totally satisfied. He has no restlessness to look for an alternative. He keeps flogging the same dead horse. There are some exceptions, which are looked at from a viewpoint of contempt and mistrust. They are accused of mimicry of the west and are put to one side. They have been convicted of the crime of creating sensation. It can be said that the New Short Story movement or some so-called movements after it (Anti-Story, Conscious Story) were the results of serious experimental efforts. I don't accept this, because the focus of those movements was solely on the content of the short story, not on its character. I am not separating content and form from one another, but rather I am suggesting that content is obtained by the very means of form, or should be obtained that way, not form by means of content. (Vaid 2002b, 4)

This absolute commitment to literary form as the basis of good literature, not the content, has been discussed with regard to Vaid's fiction in a number of places throughout this thesis. What this commitment to literary formal innovation and his disappointment with the focus of the *nayī kahānī* period being on content reflects, is that Vaid's position is starkly different from most, if not all, of his Hindi literary contemporaries. Furthermore, the critical environment was not able, or reluctant, to assign any value to the innovation in style which Vaid explored. In a discussion of how he defines experiment, or the tradition of experiment, the following excerpts from *Javāb Nahīṁ* provide critical insights:

> Experiment might be the opposite of tradition, but it doesn't have to be. Experiment sometimes strikes up a connection with something, from within several currents of tradition. No experiment is entirely free from tradition. In the novels which are experimental, behind them also a tradition can be seen—a tradition of experiment. (Vaid 2002b, 5)

> I understand their [Hindi critics'] viewpoint, that they haven't seen the non-realist or anti-realist tradition of the novel in the West, or if they have seen it then they have rejected it. My inclination is towards this tradition, which I call the tradition of experiment and in which are novels such as Don Quixote, Tristram Shandy, Rameau's Nephew, Oblomov, Notes From Underground and Sacred Fount. As far as the 19th century this tradition is certainly not so great that you could call it the main current of the novel, but in the 20th century it is critical in establishing the main form and tone of the novel. (Vaid 2002b, 6)

> So I am saying this that our misfortune is that not only have we not accepted anything from this tradition of the West, moreover we have held it in contempt...and we reject those works which we have called anti-life or artistic. (Vaid 2002b, 7)

These comments highlight the fact that Vaid was operating under a very different set of literary influences from those of his contemporaries, and in so doing earned himself a reputation for an obsession with the West, being too American, or too cerebral. The powers at play in the Hindi literary establishment meant that there was very little room for analysis of Vaid's literature on the basis of what it achieved within this framework of a larger international trend of experimentalism and resulted in his avant-garde literature, on the whole, being defined negatively. That is, in the absence of the literary tools to analyse his fiction effectively, Hindi critics (and to some degree his contemporaries) have discussed his literature in terms of its failure in meeting the goals of the dominant Hindi literary agenda. That is, the extent to which his literature could demonstrate demonstrate 'authenticity', 'Indianness', and an emphasis on content.

This chapter has shown that the framework under which Vaid was operating was fundamentally different from the framework and dominant discourse around Hindi literature in the postcolonial period. Where the dominant

discourse around sex suggests Vaid is being vulgar and obsessed with sex, Vaid argues that it is boredom and states of alienation with which he is obsessed and that his approach to sex is metaphysical and one of ambivalence. Where the dominant discourse regarding social purpose declares Vaid's fiction not socially engaging and devoid of reality, Vaid argues that the heavy presence of Soviet-style progressivism and the organized residue of Marxism has had deleterious effects on the development of modern Hindi fiction and criticism. Where the dominant discourse accuses Vaid of being overly imitative, too Westernized and evidence that he has 'sold his soul' to the American way, Vaid argues that he is committed to a tradition of experimentation which has been absent in Indian fiction. All this creates a picture of Vaid as an author who has made his own rules and has refused to bow to the pressure of the Hindi establishment and the pressure applied to conform. The discussion of the critical environment, criticism of Vaid as a result of that environment, and Vaid's rebuttal which has been provided here also add weight to the main arguments presented in the analysis of selected fiction in Chapters Two and Three. That is, while we can certainly see examples in Vaid's fiction which are confronting and acerbic in their commentary on the Indian postcolonial social, political and literary milieu, it becomes increasingly evident that affirming Indianness, social purpose or overt Western influence would be severely limited and largely ineffective tools by which to assess his fiction.

The main question which remains unresolved, in light of both the analysis and the discussion of the critical environment is: at what point will Indianness, social purpose and the demonstration of a commitment to the sanctity of Indian culture cease to be used as the yardsticks against which to measure Indian literary achievement? Sambrani has provided an articulate rendering of the issues discussed with regard to Hindi fiction, in the context of Indian art:

> The discourse of the national-modern, wedded as it is to the task of modernization and nation building through modernization, is unable to comprehend or to make space for, a history of imagination, a history of creativity. The possibilities that the creative imagination enjoys in jumping fences and in short-circuiting the narrative of logocentric history, are left out of the discourse of the nation because they do not make sense with that paradigm. That this paradigm becomes a straitjacket at times and that it

> determines the terms of what is valid as modern art or contemporary art, remains unspoken as an assumption (Sambrani 2005, 20)

Vaid has refused to allow any part of his imagination to be straitjacketed but the the nature of criticism and sluggish appreciation of his fiction are testimony to the fact that the postcolonial Hindi critical environment has been inextricably wedded to the national-modern Sambrani describes.

Conclusion

The main argument of this thesis has been that accusations of Krishna Baldev Vaid as 'unIndian', 'obscene', and 'not socially engaged' are largely the result of a set of postcolonial circumstances which have significantly influenced the development of Hindi literature and criticism. Such accusations are borne out of a very complex set of social and political circumstances which reflect postcolonial anxieties regarding how best to create a style of modernity which is both Indian and modern, rather than indicating a deep engagement with Vaid's literature. The main problem this presents both in the context of Vaid's literature and in the broader literary context is that certain types of literature which are deemed to meet the perceived needs of the modern Indian nation are privileged over literature which is not seen to do so. This situation means that literary innovation and literature which challenges the basis on which the criticism is constructed is largely rejected or given little exposure by figures of literary authority. This research has provided both detailed analysis of selected short fiction of Vaid, using the themes of sexual transgression and nation to organize the analysis, as well as an assessment of the critical environment in which Vaid's literature was received and judged.

In Chapter One the broader postcolonial milieu in which Vaid's literature was situated was discussed. The socio-political milieu, including the impact of Partition and the Indian political scene in the Nehruvian period, including the role of language in India's nationalist politics, was considered. Critical background material regarding the development of Hindi literature in the postcolonial period, and the development of modernism as a literary trend in the Indian context was also provided. The *nayī kahānī* short story genre was discussed in terms of being one of the most popular genres of the 1950s and 1960s, and provided an arena for authors to experiment more thoroughly with modernism. It also signified a shift in both style and subject matter from previous Hindi literary trends. One of the themes which emerged in the discussion of the milieu in which Vaid wrote is that there existed in the socio-political environment a significant emphasis on communist ideology and progressive ideology. This influence also filtered through into the Hindi writing environment and altered the literary landscape and Hindi writers' relationship with literary modernism. In the final section of Chapter One, a brief biography of Vaid was provided, including his experiences at the time of

partition, his career as an English literature academic in India and the United States, and an overview of his publications in the last fifty years. This was important to give the reader a comprehensive understanding of his career trajectory in order to best contextualise the subsequent analysis. The material discussed in Chapter One was critical in order to situate the detailed discussion of the texts in Chapters Two and Three which both directly and indirectly refer to this milieu.

In Chapter Two, 'Intimacy and Solitude in a Loveless City', I analysed a number of pieces of Vaid's short fiction which deal with so-called transgressive sexual acts, and argued that the evidence in the texts suggests that there is more to the text than their being merely 'obscene' or 'pornographic'. I argued that the sexual acts of the characters in the stories present a deep engagement with existential problems facing them. For example, I argued that instances of masturbation can be seen to reflect Bimal's ambivalent style of masculinity, which can be contrasted with the more 'macho' style exhibited by his colleagues. I also argued that the way Vaid sexualised literary discourse and used it as a forum for discussing the problems facing the Indian intellectual in the postcolonial period and the perceived inability to discern between what is original and what is mere imitation (mimicry) may well have offended many but also offered a probing critique of the literary milieu. In each case, the main protagonist reflected on the nature of his own existence and the idea that transient physical relationships are used in the absence of true love. The metropolis was discussed in this context as being a place of anonymity and a place where characters never seem to belong. In using shock, wit and confrontation as key writing strategies, Vaid challenged the very basis on which the postcolonial environment (both political and literary) was constructed.

Chapter Three, Dialogues with the Nation, looked specifically at the way Vaid challenged constructions of the nation and nationalism in postcolonial India. The chapter explored the way Vaid discussed the burden of tradition as a weight on the shoulders of the younger generation, and the manner in which he deconstructed traditional discourse regarding the role of forbears (specifically the mother and father figure) in shaping the younger generation, the sons of the nation. Vaid mercilessly attacked the role of the father as a protector of corpses,

and challenged the role of the mother as the bearer of tradition and moral gatekeeper of the nation. The heavy burden of tradition as having a paralysing and debilitating effect was discussed, and it was a theme which emerged in a number of contexts. Also explored was the way in which the fundamental questions facing the main protagonist differ significantly from the questions facing the nation. Again in this context, the main character Bimal in the story *Bimal, the Coffeehouse and the Fundamental Questions* emerged as someone existentially challenged and deeply disillusioned with the predominating discourse among intellectuals regarding the best way to move the Indian nation forward. One significant theme to emerge was that Vaid relentlessly critiqued his own contemporaries (the Indian intelligentsia and Hindi authors) and presented an alternative view of nation and authenticity in his more abstract novella *Uske Bayān*. Finally in Chapter Three, the role of language politics and the way Vaid has challenged the interconnectedness of language and nationalism in his fictional works was discussed. He achieves this in a number of ways, firstly in his direct references to the tension between Hindi, English and Urdu in the texts, and secondly by his eclectic choice of vocabulary, which was a mix of Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi. Such an approach to multilingualism was not well received in the early postcolonial period when the Hindi literary establishment was making significant efforts to create a style of Hindi which could be clearly distinguished from Urdu.

Chapters Two and Three demonstrated that one of the unique aspects of Vaid's literature is that it critiques the Hindi literary environment and the perceived weaknesses and preoccupations of Vaid's contemporaries. This has a destabilising effect, and is significant as it means Vaid's literature constitutes one of few, if any, voices of the postcolonial period in Hindi fiction which confront the situation and describe it in such brutally honest ways, using satire and irony as key writing strategies. It is fiction, but is so completely anchored in the postcolonial environment in which Vaid wrote, that it provides rare insights into the world of Hindi literature of the 1950s and 1960s. For many authors and scholars it is only with the passage of time and the ability to observe from a distance that such observations can be made. In Vaid's case, he observed and challenged the dominant discourse as and when it was happening.

Chapter Four discusses some of the main contributing factors to the crisis in Hindi criticism and the proscriptive role Hindi departments played in the 'canonization' of certain types of Hindi literature and critical models. This meant that there persisted, well into the postcolonial period, a dearth of alternative forms of criticism on modern Hindi fiction, with the Hindi establishment reluctant to create a new style of criticism to meet the needs of the literature which was being produced. A strong emphasis on Sanskrit poetics as the main approach of literary analysis and the extent to which a piece of literature could be deemed 'authentic' and 'Indian' predominated in the critical environment, and as argued there, this had deleterious effects on the criticism (and reception) of modern Hindi fiction. The role of state-sponsored patronage of the arts also had a significant effect on the preferencing of certain types of literature over others, and institutions such as the Sahitya Akademi emerged as heavily implicated in national politics. It was also argued that ideas of 'obscenity' and the parameters of acceptability in Hindi fiction were severely influenced by the moralism of the Hindi establishment, especially the emphasis in asserting India as in a position of moral superiority in relation to both the 'promiscuous' West, and also the perceived licentiousness of the Mughals and Muslims. Literature and Hindi literary criticism became more conservative rather than less in the colonial and postcolonial period, and a number of historical examples were provided which demonstrate the reluctance of the Hindi establishment to accept sexual acts which were not connected to intimacy and which indicated a devaluing of so-called Indian morality. The second part of Chapter Four outlined some of the main charges made against Vaid's more controversial fiction, and how these charges reflect the anxieties and limitations of the Hindi critical environment described. The final section of Chapter Four considers non-fiction literature written by Vaid which establishes how he perceived the context in which he wrote, and why he thinks his literature provoked the reactions, or silences, that it has. In the context of his own views on what he has achieved, and the influences which have been most powerful in his career, it emerged that he situates himself among a tradition of experimentation, which he argued has been absent in Hindi fiction. Furthermore, he has relentlessly challenged the Hindi literary environment as resistant to significant developments in literary form, with the preoccupation with 'subject' based literature.

What each of these chapters has shown, with the ideas developed throughout this thesis, is that the manner in which Hindi literature has been assessed, and the postcolonial anxieties which the existing criticism represents, mean that there has been little opportunity for assessment of Vaid's fiction on the basis of what he contributed in terms of innovation and experimentation. In the postcolonial circumstances described, the emphasis on authenticity, 'Indianness' and social purpose have meant that the yardsticks against which to measure literary output are deeply coloured by an agenda that delineates what it means to be 'Indian' in the modern context. In this context it is not difficult to see how Vaid 'failed' the test put before him by those in positions of literary power and influence. The main contribution of this research, as the first study of its kind dealing exclusively with the literature of Vaid and the environment in which it was written, has been to both document the contribution Vaid has made to Hindi fiction over a career of more than fifty years, but also to inaugurate discussion regarding the problematic of the Hindi critical environment which has been restricted by outmoded and nationalist, as well as statist, ways of assessing the value of a given piece of work. The complexities of the postcolonial Hindi literary environment need to be expanded in future research, and unpacking these complexities would provide us with a much better understanding of the critical landscape, which will in turn help us to better engage with works such as Vaid's and the society of which his literature is a part . Scholarship, such as that by Francesca Orsini, has been significant in outlining the contours of the Hindi public sphere for the colonial period. It is my hope that in the future a work just as detailed in nature can be produced regarding the Hindi public sphere of the period between independence and the present.

In the first paragraph of this study a vignette was provided regarding the denial of the Shalaka Samman award to Vaid in 2010, based on accusations by a Congress official that Vaid's fiction was 'pornographic'. This research has gone some way to describing the forces behind the fiasco, and has shown that to some extent at least, the limitations of the Hindi critical environment discussed still impact significantly on the Hindi literary environment. Despite the fact that there is now a coterie of authors (including Rajendra Yadav) who are willing to support Vaid's literature, the acceptance has been sluggish, and has still not altered the fact that the State has a significant role in perpetuating criticisms of Vaid's fiction as

morally inferior and a bombardment on Indian social space. There is clearly still much work to be done in exorcising the ghosts of India's past.

Vaid's texts are evidence of the fact that accusations of a lack of Indianness, social engagement or a style of 'carnivalesque promiscuity' are representative of a much broader problem, and that until these cease to be yardsticks against which to measure Hindi fiction, there is little hope for analytically rigorous analysis of Hindi fiction. Furthermore, looking more broadly at the arts in the Indian context, the problems described in the context of literature have also been discussed by other scholars with regard to art history. In this context, rather than looking to the Hindi literary environment to see what Vaid has achieved, it might be more useful to look to figures in the history of Indian art who shared Vaid's commitment to an intense and unrelenting interrogation of the modern. In this context, an artist such as J. Swaminathan comes closer to sharing Vaid's sensibilities and achievements, than do any authors from the literary environment. It is Vaid's relentless challenging of what it means to be modern, and how best to engage with tradition in creating Hindi literature which is contemporary, which I consider to be one of his major contributions to Hindi literature. He is, and always was, a fearless writer, and utterly resisted the push for him to adapt his literature to suit the perceived needs of the postcolonial Indian environment. In many ways this had a self-sabotaging effect on his popularity and meant at times he was attacked by his contemporaries and critics. Ultimately, however, what it has meant is that his fiction is innovative, continues to be deeply relevant, and represents an approach to modernist Hindi fiction which is unrivalled.

Appendix: Vaid's Publications

Novels

Uskā Bacpan (1957), (1981), (1997), (2002)

Bimal urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ (1974), (1982), (1997)

Nasrīn (1975), (1998)

Dūsrā Na Koī (1978), (1996)

Dard lā Davā (1980), (1998)

Guzrā Huā Zamānā (1981), (1997)

Kalā Colāj (1989)

Nar-Nārī (1996)

Māyā Lok (1999)

Ek Naukrānī kī Ḍāyrī (2000)

Short story collections

Bīc kā darvāzā (1962);

Merā Duśman (1966)

Dūsre Kināre Se (1970)

Veh aur Meṁ (1970)

Laptā aur Anya Kahāniyāṁ (1973)

Us ke Bayān (1974, 2002)

Merī Priyā Kahāniyāṁ (1978)

Khamośī (1986);

Alāp (1986)

Pratinidhī Kahāniyāṁ (1990)

Līlā aur Anya Kahāniyāṁ (1993)

Carcit Kahāniyāṁ (1995)

Pitā kī Parchaiyāṁ (1997)

Das Pratinidhi Kahāniyaṁ (1997)

Sampūrṇ Kahāniyāṁ-1-merā duśman, 1951-1998 (1999)

Sampūrṇ Kahāniyāṁ-1-rāt kī sair, 1951-1998 (1999)

Bodhisattva ki Bīvī (2001)

Badcalan Bīviyoṁ kā Dvīp (2002)

Saṃśay ke Sāye: Kṛṣṇ Baldev Vaid Sañcayan (2007)

Plays

Bhūk Āg Hai (1998)

Hamārī Buṛhiyā (2000)

Savāl aur Svāpnā (2001)

Parivār Akhāṛa (2002)

Monālizā kī Muskān (2003)

Kahte Haiṁ Jisko Pyār (2004)

Non-fiction publications

Technique in the Tales of Henry James (1964)

Javāb Nahīṁ: Sākṣātkār aur Ātmsakṣātkār (2002)

Khvāb hai Dīvāne Kā (*Pravās Ḍāyrī*) (2005)

Śikast kī Āvāz (2006)

Sobtī-Vaid Saṃvād (2007)

Śam'a har rang Meṁ (2007)

Translation

Goḍo ke Intazār Meṁ (Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot)(1970)

Ākhirī Khel (Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*) (1971)

Alis Ajūbon kī Duniyā Meṁ (Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*) (1990)

Feḍrā (Jean Racine's *Phaedra*) (1990)

English translations of Vaid's fiction

Steps in Darkness (*Uskā Bacpan)* (1994)

Bimal in Bog (*Bimal Urf Jāyeṁ to Jāyeṁ Kahāṁ*)(1972) (2002)

Dying Alone (Dūsrā Na Koī)(1992)

Silence and Other Stories (1972).

The Broken Mirror. (*Guzrā Huā Zamānā*).Translated by Charles Sparrows (1994)

The Diary of a Maidservant. (*Ek Naukrānī kī Ḍāyrī*). Translated by Sagaree Sengupta (2007)

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